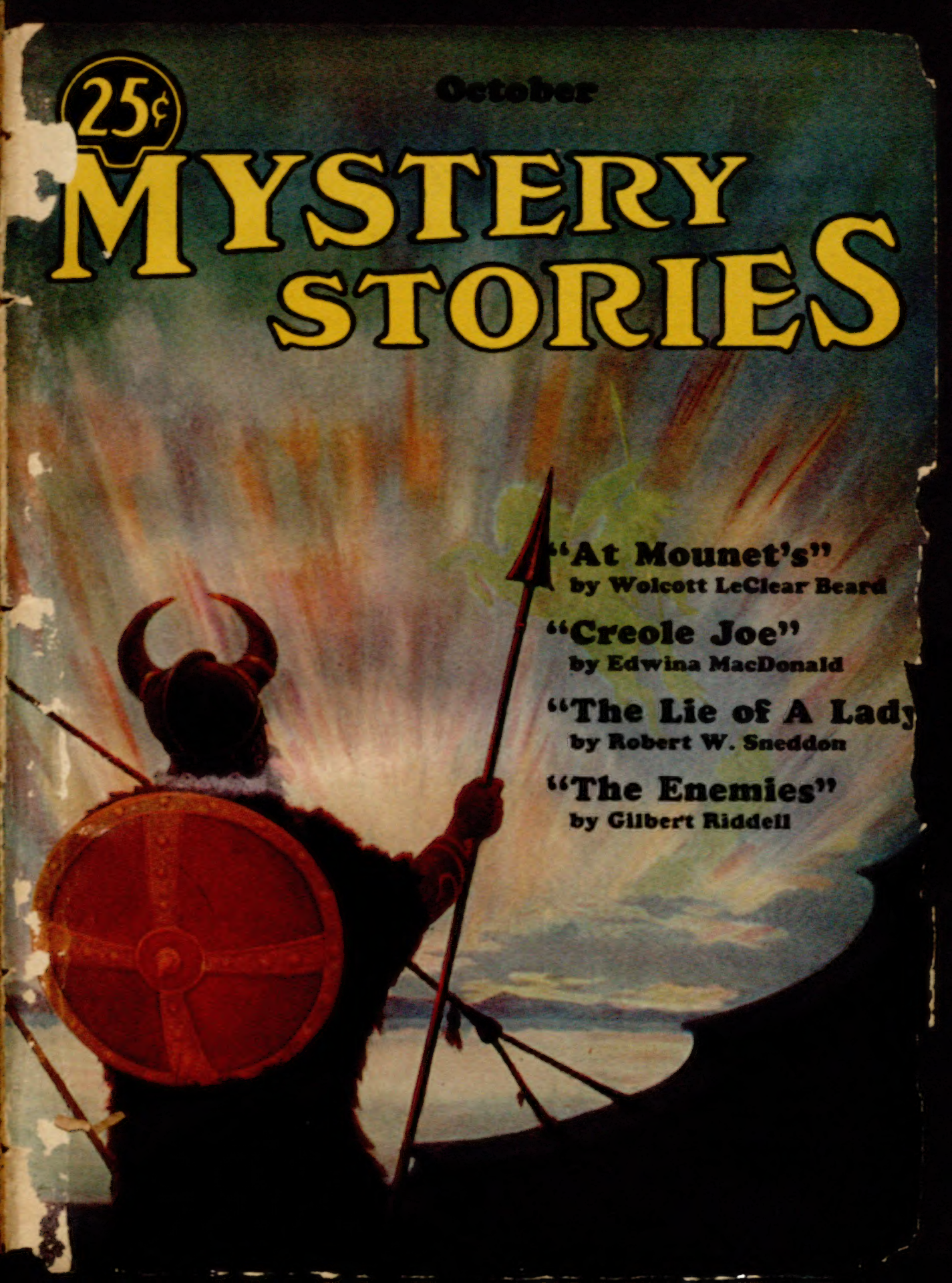
October
25¢
MYSTERY STORIES
"At Mounet's"
by Wolcott LeClear Beard
"Creole Joe"
by Edwina MacDonald
"The Lie of A Lady
by Robert W. Sneddon
"The Enemies"
by Gilbert Riddell

Yes Boy!

I make $60. a week Selling Taylor Rain-Proof Caps

"Money? I earn all I need and more. I keep my own hours. I work when I please. I have a business of my own. No boss to take orders from. Nothing to do but show amazing Rain-Proof Caps, which men order on sight. You can do as well as I."

HOW WOULD YOU like to earn $60.00 or more every week in a pleasant, dignified business of your own? How would YOU like to come home each day with $10.00 or more in cash in your pocket? I offer you the chance to make this money. Mail coupon at once for appointment before someone beats you to it! I want reliable agents in every town to demonstrate my wonderful Rain-Proof Caps, and take orders. My caps sell on sight because they are absolutely different and better than store caps. Nothing like them anywhere. **They're rain-proof!** Pour water on the surface and it rolls off. The fabric remains absolutely dry. Taylor caps can be worn in rain or snow without being soaked through. Water rolls off like a duck's back.

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This wonderful exclusive feature wins men instantly. They order at once, especially after they see the snappy, live-wire, Broadway models in which Taylor caps are made. All kinds of styles to fit every man's taste. Exclusive long-peak model makes hit with snappy young fellows. Twenty beautiful patterns to choose from—stripes, plaids, checks, plain—all kinds! And every Taylor cap is MADE-TO-MEASURE. Yes, sir—cut and tailored to fit the head of the man who orders it. Perfect fit guaranteed—Taylor quality cannot be equaled in any store cap. You make amazing three-minute rain-proof test and write dozens of orders a day, collecting big cash profits in advance. We make up caps in our factory and ship direct to your customers.

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Not only can you make amazing full-time or spare-time profits with Taylor made-to-measure caps, but our FREE OUTFIT also contains 7 other big profit-makers, including:

1.—Mufflers to match caps.
2.—Men's Stitched Cloth Hats.
3.—Men's Knickers and Caps to match.
4.—Rainproof fabrics by the yard.
5.—Girls' Bobbette Hats.
6.—New "Bobbie" Match Purse.
7.—New Initialed pin.

With a line like this, not only is every man your prospect, but you can

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NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED WORK ALL OR SPARE TIME

You don't need any experience to start in this wonderful profitable business. You keep your present job if you want to and sell Taylor Caps in spare hours. Many of my most successful agents started without any previous experience and in spare time. I taught them the business in a few days, and now they're making big money. I want to teach you, too. I'll show you just how to make more money than you ever made before—how to make this money right from the start!

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Don't send me any money. You don't have to invest a penny to enter this wonderful new field. Just mail this coupon to me today. I'll send you one of our complete selling equipments **absolutely free** of all cost. I'll send you my beautiful book showing many styles in colors, also featuring Match-Muffler, Cloth Hats, Knickers and Bobbette Hats for girls.

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Address .....

Town..... State.....

Territory Requested .....

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DEPT. B-47 **CINCINNATI, OHIO**

MYSTERY STORIES

OCTOBER 1927

VOL. XII No. 1

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN.....FRED. T. EVERETT

A BIGGER AND BETTER MAGAZINE.....THE EDITOR 4

THE ENEMIES.....GILBERT RIDDELL 5
A Complete Novelette of war-torn emotions

CREOLE JOE.....EDWINA MACDONALD 41
A Short Story of flood in the Delta Country

FIREWORKS.....ALEXANDER WILLIAMS 56
A Short Story which explodes all over the place

THE BLOOD PEARLS.....MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON 61
A Complete Novelette filled with Oriental fatalism

THE LIE OF A LADY.....ROBERT W. SNEDDON 77
A Short Story whose pages shine with the mystery of eternal mother-love

ARMOR FLASHES.....FRED. T. EVERETT 87
The Legend of the Cover Design

THE WATCH.....NEIL MORAN 88
A Short Story. Uncivilized passion meets with a primitive end

DROUTH.....JAMES H. THOMPSON 98
A Short Story of terrible thirst and a woman's burden

DUAL PERSONALITY.....MARTHA NEUMARK 104

TOO MUCH ROPE.....LILIAS REBARER 105
A Short Story in which a gay young blade is lassoed by circumstances

AT MOUNET'S.....WOLCOTT LECLEAR BEARD 115
A Complete Novelette. When Irish meets French—beware!

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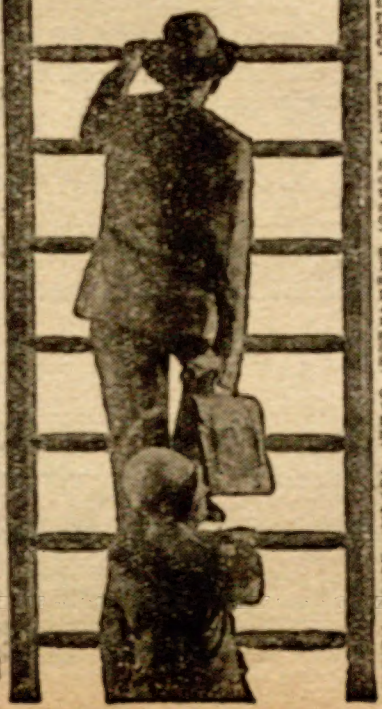

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an unusual service to its readers

¶ Realizing that one of the problems of the home is the matter of money, we now offer to our readers a new service, MONEY MAKING OPPORTUNITIES.

¶ Each month we present to you a page or more of these little advertisements, some of which may mean big opportunities for your or your friends. Tell them about it.

¶ Many of these companies are million dollar corporations. Some of them are struggling inventors. But all of them, so far as we know, are trustworthy. In case you have any questions as to a firm's reliability or should you be looking for a selling connection not to be found here, write to the Publishers' Classified Service, 9 East 46th Street, N. Y. They will help you. Please enclose a two-cent stamp if a reply is desired.

A Bigger and Better Magazine

YOU'VE liked MYSTERY STORIES in the past—the sales have proved that. But the time has come when it must be made better.

Beginning with the November issue there will be a decided change in the appearance and the contents of the magazine.

The size of the magazine will be increased by thirty-two pages.

There are to be very attractive covers of a new type, drawn by a famous American artist.

The illustrations will be virile and interesting.

The stories will be filled to the brim with action and suspense—tales of crime, crime detection, mystery of all sorts and supernatural happenings.

THE SHANGHAI BETRAYAL, by Raymond Scudder, is the complete novelette in the November issue. The action is laid in war-torn China, and there are weird plottings, strange adventures and an ending that will surprise you.

LONG SHADOWS, by Katharine Haviland Taylor, is a mystery serial that will cause little shivers to run up and down your spine as the author unfolds the intricacies of her tale.

THE SPY MASTER, by Richard Wilmer Rowan, is the title of a series of dramatic stories based on Secret Service activities during the World War. A MOST DERISIVE MERCY is the first of these intriguing tales.

Another series, GREAT UNSOLVED MYSTERIES, by Alvin F. Harlow, will be introduced in this issue. Mr. Harlow, who contributes to the leading magazines, has gathered some tremendously interesting material for these fact stories.

There'll also be a plentiful number of short stories—vivid, colorful, exciting—detective, ghost and mystery stories. Among them will be:

RAWHIDE REESE, by Paul Sand.

SEA MAGIC, by Charles G. Booth.

SIGNAL CLEVERNESS, by Warren Ordway.

COMMUNION, by Louise Platt Hauck.

THE MAN WHO LOOKED BACK, by Leslie McFarlane.

WHEN CONSCIENCE STINGS, by Walter W. Liggett.

THE CLEVERNESS OF THE BARON DE CITTABOLA, by Murray Leinster.

And finally, there'll be one or two new departments which we believe will prove of particular interest to you.

THE EDITOR.

The maddening atmosphere of a nightmare was all around them.

The Enemies

By GILBERT RIDDELL

In the midst of bursting bombs, surrounded by all the horrors of modern warfare, a lonely man—a great surgeon—finds happiness, only to have it snatched away again. His swift, brutal revenge is tempered by an unexpected bit of justice, and at the end of it all he at last finds peace.

CHAPTER I

A BLEAK CHILDHOOD

THE GREAT armies that faced each other on Flanders' fields were known and avowed enemies. In their ranks there were secret enemies whose antagonisms might have remained hidden all their lives.

During the war many men amazed even themselves by their heroism—and some by their unexpected yielding to the hatreds that lay coiled like serpents in their breasts.

An analyst might have traced for Herbert Kranach the influences that shaped his nature so that he found it easy, in the midst of saving lives at the peril of his own, to commit the strange crime that shook his life to its foundations.

In his cradle he had been lonely and neglected. His mother had exclaimed when they showed her the new infant: "What! To go through such an ordeal for an ugly thing like that!"

As he grew older, he seemed to increase in ugliness. His superb health

made him what is known as "a good baby". But even that did not help him to find favor with his mother and his nurse.

He lacked the ability to play, to attract attention with engaging ways. He lay stolidly in his cradle, silent, staring through the bars. If anyone took the trouble to rouse him he responded readily enough, but these occasions were infrequent.

He was born ambitious, showing all those marks of genius with which the great are credited after they achieve fame. His father, a gloomy, disappointed man, was the only one to notice this, however.

He never learned to creep, but from the first walked like a man, his well-shaped head held high, his sturdy little chest fully expanded. He never played with toys, but showed a tremendous eagerness for learning.

His father, a bookish man, was usually in the library. And as he showed less repulsion toward his ugly son than the rest of the family did, the little boy came to spending most of his time in that room.

IT WAS in this room, shortly after a "scene" between his parents that the young Herbert seemed uncannily to understand, that he timidly remarked to his father:

"Mother is very beautiful."

To which the elder Kranach replied in agony: "Yes, damn her!"

It was characteristic of Kranach, Sr., never to recall the spoken word, never to apologize or recant; and so, although he immediately sensed the horror that had descended upon his offspring, who had so early been taught the definition of "damn", he lapsed into silence.

And Herbert stayed silent, too. He had intended to go farther, to tell his father timidly enough that he loved that beautiful and light-minded mother; for somewhere, somehow, although it had never been mentioned in his presence, he had learned the meaning of love. He wanted to tell his progenitor that he would have liked to touch her smooth skin, to kiss her laughing mouth.

But he refrained, for somehow he realized that this was his father's own agony. And very timidly he stole nearer to his father and leaning forward imprinted his first kiss on the man's strong hand as it clenched and unclenched his cloth-covered knee.

The unhappy man's fingers grew quiet suddenly, and presently he turned and looked upon the little boy, so strong and sturdy as to body, so ugly as to face. And a tenderness that had come to him at that timid kiss was swept away by a kind of fury.

"And you—you—" he cried. "She loathes me for giving her such a son—and I can't blame her!"

The man sprang to his feet and strode forward, his hands outstretched, his fingers curved, as if he would get at the boy's throat and strangle his unwanted life out of him.

But the child never moved; he waited for the man's onslaught which, after all, never came. And as his parent sank back into his chair, covering his face with his hands and groaning aloud, Herbert walked down the room, selected a book, and went out, quietly closing the door behind him.

That was the first and final effort of his childhood to arouse affection or to bestow it. Stoically, at the age of five, he considered and accepted his great capacity for unpopularity. A lover of beauty from his childhood, he could readily understand the repulsion he must cause in others.

For he had seen his own dark,

twisted face in mirrors. Seen it, and studied it, and wondered about it. When he was duly instructed in religion he began to wonder why that "kind" God had made him so, and as soon as he got out of leading strings he cut religion out of his life.

A YEAR later Kranach, Senior, cut the Gordian knot of his existence with a knife. The result was a great deal of blood, a great many horrified people, long, luscious stories in the newspapers, a magnificent funeral, and an air of subdued relief about Mrs. Kranach.

She was not only rid of a husband of whom she had wearied, but she could now quite reasonably send her hideous son to a school and retire to indulge her grief in the more genial atmosphere of Paris. That was the last of his parents as far as Herbert was concerned for, minus the restraint of her marriage tie, Mrs. Kranach soon went the pace that kills and expired before her son could reach her.

Luckily, his father's wealth had been tied up for him, and he was under no disability as far as money was concerned, although still responsible to a guardian. His first ocean voyage was a gloomy affair; it was winter, and the fast ship that he had providentially caught rocked incessantly; the sun never shone and the decks were always covered with snow.

Besides that, his mind was full of only one thought—that he was going to his mother's funeral—that sweet, beautiful creature who would have none of him, although she had borne him.

He was going to her funeral—a lad of sixteen—going to see the last of her whom he had always secretly worshiped. And throughout the entire voyage he wrestled with the problem of whether he should kiss her cold, dead face. In life she had always avoided his caresses; had he any right to bestow them upon her when she was unable to defend herself from them?

He found her pretty corpse in the living-room of her suite at the Crillon and, as he spoke no French, he got his first glimpse of it in the presence of the interpreter provided by the hotel.

"In here, sir," said the young man in a British accent with a strong burr to it. "And permit me to say, sir, that I am very sorry, very sorry."

Herbert thanked the man and drew closer to his mother's casket. The young Irishman hesitated at the lad's elbow. He was at a great disadvantage; this young American acted so strangely. If that had been his mother—his throat constricted at the possibility of it—he would have been blind with grief.

But there were no tears in the boy's eyes. Although his manner was quiet enough, it did not seem stilled by grief. Herbert was really quelling his agony only by the exercise of his utmost control, but his experience had taught him that no one sympathized with him, no one cared about his feelings.

He could hardly expect this stranger to feel unhappy because he did—and as for displaying his feelings, he had no reason to expect anything but ridicule if he did so. Apparently the world had long since settled the matter that ugliness has no sensitiveness.

Herbert's heart was as great as his head later proved to be, but his whole problem was to conceal that fact at present.

As he went forward and leaned over the casket the young Irishman still hesitated at his elbow.

"I'll just be going now, sir, if you prefer," he said finally, deciding that

Herbert could not indulge his grief in front of strangers. "You'll find me right outside when you need me. And let me say again how sorry I am for you."

CHAPTER II

SYMPATHY

HERBERT turned and looked at this stranger; he was sorry for him—he had said so; he meant it; there could be no doubt about the genuineness of his sympathy.

"Thank you," he said. "You're the first person that has ever spoken kindly to me in my life."

No sooner had Herbert spoken in this unreserved way than his cold manner reasserted itself, and in secret he agonized over this emotional outburst. He had never exhibited one before, and his pores exuded icily as he wondered what this young stranger must think of him.

What Donald Brian was thinking came very near the truth. He had not failed to note the ugliness of Herbert's face—a skin so dark that the effect was that of ill-health, of some hidden, secret, hideous disease—a suggestion that his magnificent physique denied; features so twisted out of the usual and normal lines as to give the appearance of having been pulled that way by a master hand.

But instead of feeling repulsion, Brian felt only sympathy. A great lover of beauty himself, he had long since considered the sad case of those who are born without attractions, and his heart had gone out to Herbert.

"No wonder, sir, if that is not a polite exaggeration on your part," he said, "that you feel the death of your dear mother so deeply."

"My mother," Herbert continued, as if hypnotized into speaking the truth, "cared less for me than anybody else did."

Suddenly, as he saw the young Irishman's shocked expression change to embarrassment and realized that he had again given way to the secret emotion that was gnawing at his heart, he gave up all pretense and decided to confide his problem in the guide.

"What's your name?" he asked abruptly.

"Donald Brian, quite at your service, sir."

"I am glad to know you," said Herbert, extending his hand. "And, as I have been so frank with you—it is unusual for me to be frank with anyone—I am going to ask you to consider the problem that is stifling me."

"I shall be glad to help in any way, sir. You are so young—" He broke off, his voice thrilling with sympathy.

"My mother, in her lifetime, never allowed me to kiss her," said Herbert briefly. "Do you think that I should be justified in doing so now that she cannot deny me?"

"Undoubtedly," exclaimed Brian eagerly. "No doubt, sir, she was a little disappointed in you. Women do so love pretty babies—you must take that into consideration. And she may have been one of those dear, misguided women who never get below exteriors—not in their lives, sir.

"But now that she has gone over there, now she must see right into you, and know that you have a heart of gold, sir. Kiss her good-by—and let me pray while you're doing it that you'll have a happy reunion—over there."

The young Irishman's eyes were full of tears, his voice trembled, and Herbert regarded him with astonishment. In another moment his own feelings would have gotten the better

of him. But life had taught him to be hard.

"No," he said abruptly. "Draw the coffin lid. I have seen enough of her. Do you know Paris?"

"I have lived here and acted as guide several years," replied Brian shakenly. He realized that he was present at a tragedy of the soul, at a moment that was going to shape the other man's destiny.

"I want to see the boulevards," said Herbert, turning his back on the coffin. "No one knows me here, so I shall not be doing her any disrespect by indulging my own whims. She indulged hers all her life. The funeral, I suppose, can be tomorrow, and the burial in Pere la Chaise, as she requested."

Brian bowed and led the way from the room. He knew that it was as much as his job was worth to irritate the wealthy young American. But, in spite of Herbert's coldness and apparently unfilial demeanor, he felt certain that inwardly the lad was suffering. If he did not show him the boulevards someone else would—someone with less conscience, with no sympathy for that agonizing soul.

SO DONALD Brian guided Herbert Kranach about Paris and became the first and only friend of Herbert's life. He showed him the boulevards in their pleasanter aspects. He started at the Madeleine and led him along the boulevards, calling Herbert's attention to the beautiful shops, the street cafés with their quaint stoves and the contemplative Frenchmen slowly sipping a *café noir* or a *cognac*. Past the opera house, the arcades and the bazaars he went.

Then, doubling on his trail, he mounted Montmartre and allowed Herbert to peep in at the original *Moulin Rouge*, now gay only three days in the week. In the restaurant of the Old Terraces at the junction of the *Rue des Maistres* and the *Rue Le Pic*, where Charpentier's "Louise" lived and loved, they dined, cheaply and wisely, among struggling artists and their models.

Later they sauntered along the spacious Champs Elysees away from the Arc de Triomphe and the stilted Etoile District back to the more human haunts of the old licentious, pleasure-loving, epoch-making kings of France. And then on, through the Gardens of the Tuilleries to that enchanted ground known as the Left Bank.

On the Quai Voltaire they paused and drank in the beauty of the scene, while Donald reminded Herbert of its significance; the *Ecoles* of Arts and Sciences, the great, beautiful, sprawling "Academy" (one of its future "immortals" was even at that moment beginning to write in the little house at the corner); that incomparable Notre Dame in the distance, seen across the low arched "ponts"—the River, with that ever-dreaming light on it.

And Herbert fell in love with Paris as a man falls in love with a woman. The great passionate heart of him that could find no other resting place yearned over that most feminine of cities, and he stayed on after his mother's funeral, haunting the Ecoles until he decided upon surgery as his life work.

AFTER four years' intensive study in Paris, Kranach went on to Berlin, then at the height of its fame for miraculous surgery. If he learned marvels there, he taught the Teutons something about ruthlessness, and even the hardiest among them wondered at the great pleasure Herbert got out of his work. He answered the summons to a desperate case with his eyes eager, an anticipatory smile on his lips.

He was the personification of harshness, and this rendered him still more repulsive to women, so that outside of a few escapades that he duly paid for he knew nothing of the sex which, however, he contrived to worship in secret. And the more women fled from him the more he hated other men, especially those handsome devils who have merely to crook their fingers and the loveliest of women fall into their arms.

Kranach returned to America believing that he had conquered himself and that all he cared for now was to continue with his chosen work. The family home on Forty-ninth street near Fifth avenue appealed to him as a hospital now.

It was one of those double houses with a fairly low stoop leading up to great plate-glass doors; the vestibule was lined with carefully selected white mahogany. The inner doors were half of a darker wood, perhaps walnut, and half glass which in turn was curtained with expensive old lace.

On either side of the wide hall were great rooms trimmed in more white mahogany. After Kranach's return these were transformed into waiting-room, operating-room, laboratory and his own particularly private office. In the smallest room he installed a nurse to attend to his cases when he was out and to assist him when he operated.

HE HAD selected this nurse from many applicants for the post because of her eyes. It was not their beauty that appealed to him, but a certain hard glitter that he had never encountered before in female orbs. That was what he wanted—a woman who could be hard, to whom bleeding tissue would offer no horrors.

"It will be a hard job," he told Miss Folsum roughly. "You will have to be at your post practically twenty-four hours. I am willing to pay for all that, of course. But I want someone who has no outside entanglements."

"Then you want me," said Edith Folsum. "I haven't a friend or a relative. And I want to work all of the time that I am awake."

Kranach liked her answer, but he looked a little more closely at her. She was an attractive young woman of twenty-eight or so, with dark brown hair and gray eyes. Her skin was very pale, but she did not seem unhealthy. There were light lines about her pleasant mouth which indicated some kind of suffering. Kranach guessed roughly that it was mental.

"You won't have time," he said, "for anything or anyone but me."

"That is what I want," Edith insisted. "I want to work every minute; I don't want time to think."

The instant she had uttered this last phrase Miss Folsum regretted it—that fact was plain in the sudden embarrassment that fell upon her face and manner. She had drawn the veil aside for a moment and permitted Kranach a peep at her heart; and he saw that she hated herself for this. She must have suffered very greatly, then, he decided; for she was not the sort to whine about herself.

He had been sitting down while she stood; he rose now, nodding his head.

"All right," he said abruptly. "Take your hat off."

CHAPTER III

AN ACCIDENT

ALTHOUGH there was really nothing casual about Kranach's engagement of Miss Folsum, for he could consider a matter and decide on it in the least possible time, it did seem to Edith that she had been engaged by

an impulsive man. The very salary that he paid her seemed a whim to one who had been desperately poor all her life. Ten thousand dollars a year was a miraculous wage in those halcyon years before the great war.

And, after a while, Kranach suggested that she might as well live in his house, as she was practically always there. He had a room and bath, with sitting-room, fitted up for her on the second floor. And when she spoke of paying rent for it, he simply glared at her and walked out of the room.

In those prim times the servants were apt to fear the worst about any such arrangement as that; but neither Miss Folsum nor Kranach cared anything about Mrs. Grundy. Edith calmly took possession of her lovely rooms, and ate her three meals a day at the same table with Kranach. She held herself at his beck and call, functioning so perfectly as almost to gain a little praise from him now and then.

But he contented himself with thinking that she was a darned good nurse and a "find" for him. And Edith could only guess that she was satisfying this exacting man with her service.

He had said that she must hold herself in readiness for work at all hours, so she was seldom out of her uniform. Even when he roughly demanded that she take some exercise, she simply threw a coat over her white garments and tramped over to Park avenue and walked the required number of blocks.

He explained his solicitude about her health on the ground that he did not want her to get sick and need to be doctored. Edith Folsum took it for granted that this was all there was to the matter. She was a machine to the famous Doctor Herbert Kranach, she told herself, and nothing more.

And she was grateful for that fact. She was grateful to him for the huge salary he paid her, for the home—a queer, rather gloomy, unhomelike home—he had provided for her, but above all for the occupation he had given her.

SHE HAD not been living there long before she perceived that Kranach was as lonely as she, herself. Neither the physician nor his nurse ever received a letter or a telephone call, except about matters pertaining to their profession. When he was not engaged in operating or attending on patients, Kranach did a great deal of reading.

One day he mentioned a book he was perusing to Edith and, as she showed a great deal of interest in it, he lent it to her. After that it became a habit of his to read a book and then pass it on to her with the comment "That's a damned good piece of writing," or "That's no good. But you needn't take my word for it. Read it yourself."

But Edith always took his word for it, for she soon discovered that he had an excellent taste in literature; and the books he damned went unread.

He brought his book of the moment to the table, so that there was little conversation between them. And Edith often scrutinized his ugly face as he bent it over the volume.

His twisted features and dark skin had never repulsed her from the beginning. His harsh manners had been welcome to her. She had wanted nothing from men at that moment except the opportunity to earn her living.

Kranach had given her this, and so much more. He had treated her as if she were another man—giving her no quarter because of her femininity, expecting her to do tasks that required a man's strength, swearing

richly and roundly at her upon those few occasions when she seemed to blunder.

She had reflected many times that not only Kranach's manners matched his ugly face, but his occupation also. She had worked for other surgeons, some of the most popular, and she had seen how sometimes they shrank from the terrible tasks that lay before them.

She had known how necessary it was for them to fill their leisure hours with the lightest, most trifling occupations. And that as the years went on they found it necessary to increase the hours of leisure.

But with Kranach his knife was his god. He was unhappy unless he had just finished a big operation or had one ahead of him. His eyes gloated over the unconscious form on the glass table; he seemed a kind of demon at times.

And yet he had never lost a patient. He had brought those dying people back to life—a freer, more abundant life than they had ever known. And he gloried in that, too.

He received few fees.

"The best cases are among the poor," he explained to Edith Folsum. "And they have no money to pay me."

That was all he sought—ugly, complicated cases that would have frightened most surgeons away. Removing a rich man's appendix was such a trifle that he usually turned the job over to a young assistant, and handed him the check when the patient sent it.

EDITH would sit there at the table in the dining-room, glancing stealthily at Kranach as he bent over his book, trying to reconcile this man's mania for carving into the human body with the good he did for humanity—trying to reconcile it and thanking God, in the name of humanity, for such a man.

Then she would begin to analyze his features. He had not, as she saw presently, one really ugly feature. His nose was the perfect Anglo-Saxon type, but it had been twisted to one side. His dark eyes were large and capable of a thousand changes of expression. But his eyelids had been drawn so close together that one caught only a glimpse of the orbs themselves; and he had short, reddish eyelashes. His eyebrows were almost non-existent and, although he had a fine, high forehead, his dark hair grew so low on it as to ruin its outlines.

In his childhood no one had thought of straightening the teeth of children, and his large teeth overlapped each other and showed with startling plainness every time he opened his mouth. His lips, Edith saw, were of a good shape and well colored, but the upper one was too short, and he showed too much of his gums when he talked. And his chin had been almost omitted from the scheme of things.

Yet there was such strength in his expression, so much character in the lines of his fine body, straight and supple as a young athlete's, that all the tendencies his face seemed to advertise were offset by it.

Once as she sat there, fascinated, gazing at this ugly man who had been like an angel to her in his own gruff way, he looked up quickly and caught her at the inspection.

A kind of fury swept across his face; Edith saw that his eyes were instantly shot with blood, and she withdrew her gaze in a sort of panic.

He resented her inspection, of course, and she might have known it. Fear lest she lose this absorbing occupation, more than terror at the loss of her salary, caused her to be very careful in future to avoid looking at Kranach.

So that, after a while, hearing

only his deep, commanding voice, dwelling only on his marvelous skill, reading the books he lent her, she began to forget his ugliness and to dwell only on the surgeon's tremendous personality.

In that last bit of peace before the World War there was also a conspicuous absence of sickness and death. As if the world were pausing and drawing a long breath before it plunged into the maelstrom. Some thought the Golden Age had come. Perhaps it had—and passed on, quickly.

Herbert Kranach showed very plainly his anxiety that there would be no more patients hanging upon his knife, as it were, for life or death. He moved restlessly about the house, walked restlessly about the town, and was harsher and bitterer than ever to his associates and dependents.

HE CAME home one day to find Edith Folsum waiting for him at the door.

She had news for him that she knew he would be glad of. He was needed to save a life—to save a woman's life—a young woman's life. None other, in fact, than Irene Burton, a very lovely girl who had been a popular débutante several years before. Irene was the secretary of the Junior League, and her engagement to Owen Phelps had just been announced.

Edith was waiting for Kranach with this tremendous news—her face whiter than ever, those faint lines around her mouth considerably deepened, her voice weakened as if by lowered vitality.

Kranach noticed all these things even while his nurse was giving him the details of the accident that had put Irene Burton at his mercy. She had not only lost the force of her average voice, but she spoke in gasps.

"Irene—Burton—" she was saying. "You know who she is, of course. Horribly hurt—dying, perhaps—hurry."

Kranach made no answer while he prepared himself to accompany his nurse. There was no answer to make. And, besides, Edith kept on talking.

"She was crossing Fifth avenue—near her home—above Fifty-ninth street. A truck—a big one—came around the corner. I suppose the driver and she didn't see each other. At any rate, she's—oh, I can't tell you any more. I've been there. Hurry—perhaps you can save her. If anyone can you can."

If anyone could save this girl he could! Edith's words were like music to his starved soul. He had had praise of a sort, the kind a great man gets from his grudging contemporaries. He knew his own value. But no woman had ever offered him the guerdon before.

"You are coming with me?" he asked in a tone unusually mild.

"Of course!" replied Edith Folsum.

She seemed not only surprised, but a little dismayed by the question.

There was no interchange of talk between the doctor and his nurse as they were driven uptown to the Burton home. There was none as the surgeon examined his patient and acknowledged inwardly that he had met his Waterloo at last.

If he were clever enough to prolong the life of this young girl he would be doing something to be proud of. Oddly enough, Edith noted, he did not approach this case with his usual grin of satisfaction.

After an hour over the unconscious victim Kranach was wiping his brow and staring across the table at Edith Folsum.

"I think that's all now," he said in

a low tone. "I don't believe she could stand any more."

Edith nodded, and Kranach noticed that she was as white and shaken as he himself. But he concluded that youth and beauty in distress claim toll from the stoutest of us, and thought no more about it.

CHAPTER IV

A CONSULTATION

HE WAS alone in his study after dinner—a meal that both he and Edith had passed through in a silent, distrait mood—when a servant announced Owen Phelps.

Kranach could not live in New York and be ignorant of this young man. Not only had he endured a great deal of publicity on account of his inheritance, his position as the last one of an old Knickerbocker family, and his engagement to Irene Burton, but because of his personal beauty.

It was something of which he was evidently proud, for he never failed to give his photographs to the newspapers when they asked for them. And since his betrothal to Irene he had been very liberal.

The two men met each other standing, for Kranach had risen to receive his unexpected guest. After the first greeting they stared at each other rather silently.

Each was thinking that he had met his exact opposite. If Phelps' masculine beauty astounded and nauseated Kranach, the surgeon's ugliness startled and somewhat dismayed the other man. He seemed, in fact, confused by it—a little alarmed, overpowered, as it were, by the surgeon's masterful ugliness.

Seeing this, Kranach suggested:

"You have come to see me about your fiancee, Miss Burton?"

"Exactly," agreed Phelps eagerly. And Kranach noticed that the gods had forgotten nothing in the case of Owen Phelps—even his voice had a beauty that was music.

"I—er—well, I came to ask you to tell me the truth," he went on. "It's an awkward situation, you must admit. You see, I—well—you see me."

He paused and began to smile.

Just as Kranach's rare smile transformed his features from ugliness into something engaging and attractive, so did Phelps' smile alter his features until there was nothing left of their original beauty. His eyelids narrowed until his fine eyes looked mean, small, cunning; his nostrils dilated until his nose looked like a caricature; his upper lip lifted, revealing his long, white, cruel teeth in a snarling, leering grin.

Kranach stared at this erstwhile handsome man incredulously. Even the man's skin, white and flushed with the hue of health, slowly took on a tinge that could only be called yellow.

"You see," he went on, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, "I came here to speak to you—as man to man. I know from what I have heard about you that you will tell me the truth."

He was warming to his subject and, as Kranach remained silent, smiled fatuously at him.

It was Phelps' experience that other men enjoyed listening to his adventures with women, especially such a man as Kranach. The surgeon, Phelps surmised, could never have known success with women. He was just the sort to be intrigued with the tasty tales he had to tell.

So he proceeded upon his hunch to hint that while Irene Burton was all very well, there were hundreds of other women he could have for the asking. And for that reason he wanted to know the truth about Irene's accident—the question being

whether, if she were going to live, she would be a cripple.

"You see," he went on smirking, and confidential, "I just want to know whether she's going to be crippled for life. You know that fellows like me can get any woman they want. And—life is short—this war between the Allies and Germany sort of rubs that in. Why, we ourselves may get into it any day. And life, hampered by a crippled wife! Well, the way I look at it is this—it would be a joke for a man like me to have one!"

"Yes," said Kranach slowly, "it would—a cosmic joke."

Phelps frowned and hesitated.

"Yes, exactly," he agreed uncertainly. "So you can see why I came to you. I came to ask you to tell me the truth. Is Irene going to be a cripple if she lives?"

Kranach remained silent for a moment; the while his keen eyes swept the handsome mask of the other man. So, this was the sort of thing for which a woman gave her life away. While to him, who was so full of tenderness for the frailty and foibles that constitute woman, not one of them would vouchsafe a smile. Not one save Edith Folsum, who had tendered him that one word of praise.

"I am glad that you came to me, Mr. Phelps," said Kranach finally. "I have only to confirm your worst suspicions."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Owen.

His features had relaxed to their normal contours.

"What an escape!" he added thankfully. "I can't tell you how grateful I am to you, Doctor Kranach."

He held out his hand.

The surgeon pretended not to see it.

"I should, if I were you," he said, "go to Miss Burton at once and cancel your engagement. One never can tell what may happen in such cases. Good-night, Mr. Phelps."

THE DOOR behind Owen opened and Edith Folsum came into the study. Kranach was glad of her interruption, but entirely unprepared for the result of her encounter with Phelps.

The man started, smiled feebly and then held out his hand.

"Why," he exclaimed, "you—you are here!"

Miss Folsum ignored Owen's outstretched digits even as Kranach had done.

"Yes, I am here," she admitted and stepped back to permit of his egress.

"I—I—" Phelps stammered, opening the door for himself. "I am so glad," he finished. And then with a vague goodby to Kranach, and a nod at Miss Folsum, he bolted from the room.

The surgeon and his nurse faced each other in the ensuing calm that succeeded Phelps' departure.

"Mrs. Burton just phoned to say that her daughter seemed out of danger, according to the nurse's report. She wants to know if you think she will be a cripple—and, if there is any possibility of such a thing, is there anything you can do to prevent it."

"Thank you," said Kranach. He had not missed the encounter between Edith Folsum and Owen Phelps; the glances that had passed between them had not escaped him.

"You take a great interest in Miss Burton's case," he suggested.

"Yes," replied Edith. "It is an interesting case."

"Especially," said Kranach, "as her fiancé has come to ask me the same question that Miss Burton's mother just phoned to you."

"The same question?" repeated Miss Folsum.

"Exactly."

"And your answer—" The girl took a step forward, watching Kranach's face.

"That," said the surgeon, "does not matter. Nor can I reply to Mrs. Burton tonight. But tomorrow—tomorrow I believe I shall be able to tell both of them that Irene will not be a cripple. In the meantime——"

He paused and Edith waited for him to go on, realizing that he was thinking out loud as he had a habit of doing in her presence.

"In the meantime," he continued presently, "I am going to take the chance of my life so far, in order to disappoint that cowardly whelp!"

Edith came nearer to him.

"You mean that he—that Owen Phelps came here to——"

"Yes," Kranach interrupted her. "Came here to get the truth from me—so that if Irene Burton were doomed to lameness all her life he could break the engagement now, while there was yet time. That's the sort he is!"

Edith was leaning against his flat-topped desk. For a moment she seemed to lean rather heavily. Then she straightened up and walked slowly toward the door.

"Shall you need me again tonight?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied Kranach.

THE NURSE paused at the threshold.

"I came to tell you—and forgot—that we've gone in—that America is in the war."

Kranach caught his breath in sharply.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "That means—well, of course, I shall get over with a hospital unit as quickly as possible. I have been longing to get in ever since it started. There will be cases——"

He paused and that slow, devilish smile spread over his face, as if he were anticipating with relish the horrors he would encounter.

Edith regarded him with a kind of horrified fascination.

"You will take me, of course," she suggested.

She was far from feeling the confidence her tone implied. She was sure that she was no more than a machine to the surgeon. If he should decide that she was not the right machine to accompany to France, there would be no use appealing to him on the ground of her great desire to go.

"It will take courage," replied Kranach shortly. "I think you have that. It will take stamina, and you have a good deal of that. I shall not be satisfied with any situation any farther from the actual front than I can manage. It is no place for a woman."

"It is the right place for this woman," said Edith eagerly. She saw that he really wanted to take her, that he was only hesitating for her sake. But she was afraid to press the matter then, for she knew he hated nagging.

"I have become so interested in your work, in your methods, that I cannot bear the thought of being left behind," she added, however, as he made no answer.

This was the first time in Kranach's memory when a woman had shown any personal interest in him whatever. The fact that Edith claimed only an interest in his work did not matter. His work was himself. To praise that, to want to be connected with him, was to do him honor.

"Very well," he said gruffly. "I suppose you have considered the possible consequences, so I need not refer to them. Good-night."

Edith left him with a scant "Good-night" herself. She was unaware of it, but she often seemed as hard and

immovable to the surgeon as he did to her.

A FEW days later the fact that Irene Burton had been operated on by Kranach and saved by his magic skill from eventual lameness ran the war news a close second. He had taken a fearful chance and won. Congratulations poured in upon him from his fraternity, and Kranach did not fail to mention his nurse's able assistance.

"Without Edith Folsum," he said, "I could not have done it."

"Without me?" she asked him when they were alone. "I did nothing but obey your orders."

"And show your faith in me," said Kranach. "It was a time when I needed faith like that—beside my conceit in my own skill."

The beautiful girl progressed steadily toward recovery, and before Kranach and Edith left for France they both saw a paragraph in the paper to the effect that Irene Burton had broken her engagement with Owen Phelps.

Neither the surgeon nor his nurse mentioned this paragraph to each other. But Kranach clenched his hands and saw red as he perused it. So, that beast had gone to the girl and asked her to let him off!

Well, it was a good thing for her, if she could only see it that way. But it was maddening to realize that a man with a fine exterior could gain the love of such a girl—that women's eyes should be blinded by good looks to what lay at the heart of a man.

CHAPTER V

"I LOVE YOU"

THE ALLIES had been retreating for three days; Kranach's hospital unit which had been placed a mile behind the front line trenches was in the very thick of the fight now.

The "unit" consisted of a large canvas tent attached to a wooden base. It contained four cots, an operating-table, medicine cabinets, equipment for heating the tent and for heating water. In the "unit" were Kranach and Edith Folsum, and a young surgeon who had begged to be allowed to accompany them.

For nearly two years now Edith and Kranach and young Ormsby had worked together in that canvas tent, which had been the only home any of the three had known during that time. To live in such a way was nothing short of dire hardship to a woman, Kranach knew. But Edith had not only shown herself indifferent to the hardships but had invented little ways of her own to make things easier for everybody.

During most of that time they had been busy night and day with the wounded and the dying. Occasionally, especially during that winter when the Allies were far forward in cold, ice-bound Flanders, and there could be no fighting because of the conditions, they had taken a few days' rest and recreation in Paris.

But Kranach's name was a byword among the soldiers for the miracles he performed on desperate cases, the care he took of them afterward. And Edith came in for her share of adoration. The Colonel said that Kranach's outfit increased the courage of his men a hundredfold; no one was afraid of getting wounded on that sector. They knew that the magical surgeon, Herbert Kranach, would make them as good as new again.

There had been a pause in the more desperate fighting, while each side counted its killed and wounded and attended to the latter. The last batch had been sent back to the base hospital, and Kranach was taking a breathing spell with his little staff.

The tent had been placed in a sheltered spot, behind a low hill. It was one of the few eminences of any sort that this particular sector still held intact. Most of them had been blown into heaps of dirt, almost leveled with the surrounding fields.

They were standing on the summit of this little eminence, and it was the first time that Kranach had realized how close the enemy had come.

It was a day of unusual gloom, fading swiftly into darkness. But, owing to the constant bursting of shells, and the uncannily bright lights from the aeroplanes whirring dismally above the widespread battle array, they were able to keep track of the little tanks creeping forward to defend them. To Kranach they looked hopelessly inadequate.

For the first time he began to realize he had been right when he told Edith that his hospital at the front was no place for a woman. He glanced aside at her slender form, held so lightly erect, at her compassionate woman's eyes threatening moisture in spite of her superb control as she stood there silently reflecting that so many of those dear boys going forward so bravely to their doom would undoubtedly be lying wounded, and at her mercy and that of Kranach's, in a few hours.

She clenched her hands in a silent prayer for strength not to fail them.

The shells were becoming more frequent, the enemy planes bolder; the air was filled with booming, hollow sounds caught up endlessly with the sharp patter of bullets. The bombardment became suddenly much worse than it had been half an hour ago.

Kranach used his glasses to reconnoitre to better advantage. Men were rushing up out of the trenches, springing forward, then backward, then lying motionless. Other men sprang forward into the darkness and were lost in that barrage of smoke. Still others fell back, fighting and dying like heroes.

THE TRAMP of soldiers' feet came up the little hill behind them. A young officer was trying to decipher a map that he held in his hand. He was examining it eagerly by means of a pocket flashlight, for the night was coming on in earnest now.

He stumbled against Kranach, and his squad nearly ran the others down in their eagerness to follow him.

"Oh, I beg pardon," he panted. "I'm looking for a river."

"There's a red one down there," said Kranach grimly.

"I'm new to this sector," exclaimed the sergeant, ignoring the gruesomeness of Kranach's reply.

"I've noticed a little stream," interposed Ormsby, "over there to the left."

"Righto!" exclaimed the sergeant cheerily. "That'll be it. They call 'em rivers over here. Hello!"

He had started rapidly down the hill, his squad tumbling after him—a light from an aeroplane picked them out. The next minute there was a noise as if the universe were falling to pieces. Then there were scraps of humanity, where once had been a group of living men. Kranach was thrown to the ground, but he scrambled to his feet instantly, looking about for the others.

"I'm all right," Edith called out in the comparative silence that followed the shell.

Kranach grabbed at her in the dark and found her. He stood there a minute holding her hand tightly.

"Where's Ormsby?" he asked.

Something that stirred and moaned at their feet attracted their attention. Kranach turned his pocket light on the human bundle. It was

his young assistant; a brief examination showed him that that moan had been the last sound the boy would ever make.

"This" — began Kranach — "this convinces me that you must go back to Paris on the next lorry."

He began dragging the girl down the hill toward the tent. The noise, which had subsided for an instant, broke out again, more demoniac than ever.

"No, no," she kept protesting, her lips so close to his ear that he could feel her warm breath on his face, "not without you."

NOT WITHOUT him! Kranach was silent. Her low voice had carried to his heart—that starved, hungry heart. There had been a note in her voice that suggested what he had come to mean to her.

She had wanted to cross the sea with him because of his work. Now she refused to seek safety and leave him alone in danger.

He had gradually grown very fond of the girl; her splendid courage alone was enough to endear her to anyone who had seen as much of it as he had. But, while she worked and lived and evidently thought like a man, she had lost none of that subtle feminine allure.

He knew that she was dearer to him now than anything on earth. And he felt a kind of panic that he had not realized how precious she was going to be to him, and had allowed her to be exposed to this hideous danger.

Men like Kranach who seem so hard on the exterior are really more prone to emotional storms than other men. In fact, it is their secret recognition of this fact that makes them raise the barrier of harshness and reserve between themselves and the world.

They had gone through engagements before, but none had been as devastating as this, as ruinous to the strongest morale; for the Allies were retreating fast and thoroughly. It looked as if nothing could stop them; as if all the splendid work of years, the sacrifice of so many thousands of lives, was to go for nothing. As if some gigantic Fate laughed at the Allies as it went leisurely on with its own plans of annihilation.

Annihilation! That was what it would presently amount to. Kranach knew that now. Those poor little tanks had been wiped out, as if some monstrous hand had swept them off a board.

"The checkerboard of nights and days," Kranach whispered to himself.

He had drawn Edith into the comparative shelter of the tent, where she had gone swiftly to work to light the lamps and start the stove going for hot water. At any minute now some poor devil might crawl wounded, dying, to them for help. Some? Hundreds!

In the dim interior Kranach saw that Edith's hands were trembling slightly, that her eyes were moist.

He gazed at her hungrily. He knew that he loved this quiet girl, not only for her splendid courage, her efficient aid, but for her sweet womanliness. He longed to take her in his arms, to tell her this, to comfort her, to whisper that she must not fear, that he would get out of this hell somehow, alive and well!

But that would be a lie, he knew. He could not do it. He was powerless to save her—powerless to save himself. He might drag her against her will along the road ahead of the retreating army, but they would soon be overtaken by a shell.

She caught his intent gaze, and he felt that there was understanding in her eyes. She knew he loved her, she knew the agony he was enduring

because he had thoughtlessly brought something so precious into this frightful danger.

The awful booming crept nearer. The Teutons were bringing their guns forward, forward. It must be almost a rout! It seemed as if one or two shells had been aimed directly at the tent, they burst so near.

AS ONE burst just outside the canvas shelter Kranach saw a shudder run through Edith's body. He could stand no more. Whether she loved him or not, he must tell her that he loved her, must beg her to forgive him for bringing her here. With his own body, if with nothing else, he could shield her from danger for a while.

He caught her in his arms, and as she raised surprised eyes to his face the din seemed miraculously to pause so that she heard him quite clearly as he whispered wildly, "I love you, I love you, my dear. Forgive me."

The sudden peace continued for a while—symbolic, Edith thought, of the peace that had suddenly come into her lonely life. She had admired his skill first, then his character; then she had sympathized with his supreme loneliness.

If she could not quite feel that she loved him, she knew that life with him would be a great happiness. She knew that she could rely upon his strength and devotion, in any crisis. If—they survived this terrible hour!

And if they did not—she reckoned swiftly what this great-hearted man's life had been. He had thrown out hints. She had guessed something of his tragic childhood. She knew about his parents. If they did not survive, then they might at least snatch a few happy moments.

She felt contented in his arms, as a babe does in its mother's. She put up her fine, strong hand with its slender fingers and pulled his forehead downward to her lips.

"And I—adore you," she whispered.

Kranach had never dreamed of hearing those words in a woman's voice; he drew her pretty head down to his shoulder and rested his head against her in a peace that seemed, after a bit, to have become universal—a silence that spread out and engulfed them, save for a very occasional shell, an infrequent booming of a gun. A silence that must be broken.

Edith broke it.

"I think—I believe the worst is over. Either we're captives, or—"

"Or we're victors!" exclaimed Kranach.

He felt a strange exhilaration which was mostly personal. He was a victor; he had triumphed at last. He had won a heart that he could love and trust. Still he held her closely in his arms, and she felt that they were trembling. Humbly she realized what her love was going to mean to this great man. She knew already what his love and protection would mean to her.

His lips quivered as he hurried into speech.

"Whether we're victors—or captives—will you marry me? Will you be my wife, when this hell is over?"

"You are honoring me," said Edith devoutly. "You know that I cannot refuse you."

"You consider it an honor to be loved by me?" demanded Kranach, his voice husky with incredulity.

"Of course," Edith replied softly.

She felt his arms tighten about her. She heard his breathing grow rapid. For a moment she exulted in the great power she had over this strong man. Then a low moan outside caught her ear, and she pushed him almost savagely away from her.

"The wounded," she said. "It's beginning—our end of the work."

Kranach had staggered against a cot and fallen on it as Edith broke from his embrace. It was as if he had suddenly lost a prop. He sat there for a moment, his head in his hands. Then he jumped up.

"Yes," he said. "It's beginning—our work. I think we must have advanced."

His voice gradually resumed its ordinary tone. He passed his hand across his brow as if to assist himself in awakening.

"I'll go and see."

He paused at the entrance to the tent.

"I want you to know that I worship you," he said simply. "That I trust myself to your keeping, as you do to mine. I shall never fail you. Don't fail me."

Then he rushed out.

Fail him! Edith Folsum stood where Kranach had left her, listening, and thinking. Listening for signs of a return bombardment, of danger to this man who had now suddenly become all she had in life. This man who belonged to her, with all his great achievements. It was characteristic of her that she forgot all about his vast fortune.

She stood there, steadying herself with one hand clenched on the operating table. Her head was bowed, as if in a prayer of thankfulness to the Providence that had sent her this great good fortune in the midst of that hell.

CHAPTER IV

TEMPTATION

HER HEAD bowed, she stood so, in that uncanny silence that succeeds a great bombardment. She saw the canvas flap of the tent move slightly; then it was flung back and a man crawled into the tent.

As Edith gazed at him he craned his neck around and, seeing her, jumped to his feet with a cry of thankfulness. As he advanced toward her, Edith shrank back.

"Owen Phelps!" she exclaimed.

The man's skin was a sickly yellow, which began to fade as he raked the tent with his eyes and found no one but Edith there.

He called her name, as he continued to advance toward her, in that soft, musical voice so few women had been able to resist. The nurse made a little movement, as if she would have shrunk from him; but instead she remained where she was.

In another moment his arms were around her. She was breathing rapidly, her body quivering, helpless in his arms.

"Darling," he murmured, and raised her lips to his.

For a moment she struggled against his caress, but his touch was fire to her; she surrendered helplessly. Phelps had little time to lose, so he did not prolong the kiss.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, struggling futilely against his encircling arms.

"Deserting, if you don't mind," he replied with his characteristic nonchalance. "I hate war, loathe it, but they got me. I couldn't get out of it. I was determined that I would, though, the first chance I got. Tonight it came, in the midst of this hell—and you're going to help me."

"I?" exclaimed Edith. She had struggled out of his arms at last and faced him, her eyes blazing. "Why should I help you?"

Over Phelps' shoulder she saw the tent flap move as if someone were about to enter; then it was dropped again.

"I know what you mean," temporized Phelps. "But I'll make all that up to you—if you'll help me. I never loved Irene Burton. She threw herself at me——"

"You never loved any woman," interrupted Edith.

"True," smiled Phelps complacently. "But I'll marry you, if you'll get me out of this. You were crazy to marry me once."

There was a terrific pause. Edith felt herself overwhelmed by the sinister charm of this man again. It was true that once she would have thought herself in Paradise if he had asked her to marry him; she had, in fact, let him see it, almost —if tacitly—begged him to marry her.

Her character melted as before a fiery ordeal. She answered weakly:

"But I am engaged to Herbert Kranach."

She had, unconsciously, moved closer to Phelps. He caught her in his arms, laughing derisively.

"You can't marry that ape! Especially as you have loved me. If he knew, he wouldn't want you."

THE GASP that Edith gave alarmed Phelps vaguely; he saw a startled look in her eyes, and became aware of another presence in the tent. He relinquished her to face Kranach.

A corner of the tent flap was still in the surgeon's hand as if, overwhelmed by some tremendous excitement, he had forgotten to drop it. He must have overheard his damning remarks to Edith, Phelps knew at once.

There was only one thing to do —brazen it out. If Kranach had heard, he argued, all the better. If he had at last got a woman to consent to marry him, he would never let her go. But he would, of course, prefer to have the world think his choice a pure one.

"Well," said Phelps, that slow, sneering smile creeping over his perfect features, "you overheard, I suppose. I guess you thought Edith was a perfect angel of purity. Believe me, my friend, no woman is that. But also, believe me that I have no desire to interfere with your happiness. No one shall ever know the truth about your fiancée, if you will help me get out of this hell."

He paused, confident, still smiling, while Kranach's smoldering eyes dwelt upon his features as if he would carve them upon his memory.

Kranach kept silent until Phelps began to feel uneasy. And then he said quietly:

"I'll help you."

Phelps did not understand the tone in which Kranach made this promise, nor the little cry that broke from Edith's lips. He put his own interpretation upon both, however. Edith was amazed at the surgeon's yielding; Kranach was anxious to hide the truth about the woman he wished to marry.

"Lie down there," said Kranach, indicating a cot on the right.

Phelps sidled to the cot and stretched himself along it obediently.

Kranach came to the foot of the canvas bed and began drawing up the sheet.

"Bring that bottle," he said, speaking to Edith for the first time. Phelps was lying down now and could not see what bottle Kranach had indicated. In fact, the surgeon had drawn the sheet up so swiftly that there was no chance to see.

Kranach pulled the sheet over Phelps' head with one hand, while with the other he shoved something over Owen's nose.

There was an odor that startled the deserter, and he made a wild, ineffectual effort to throw off the sheet, to thrust Kranach's hand away. But a sudden weakness descended upon him, a feeling of utmost peace. Still he tried to resist,

and could not. Then a feeling of relief sank upon him and he drifted away into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER VII

SHATTERED

WEN PHELPS had heard Edith as she moved across the hard boards to do the surgeon's bidding. She herself had not heard anything, felt anything since Kranach entered. Her own outcry when Kranach had promised to aid Phelps was inaudible to her.

Her senses were numb; she fumbled as she picked the bottle Kranach had indicated from the row of phials in the glass cabinet. Ever since Kranach had come in she had been trying to look into his eyes—but after that first blasting glance of blazing incredulity with which he had regarded her, he had not noticed her again, except to issue orders.

If no other woman had ever been attracted by Kranach, none other had ever looked into the surgeon's soul as Edith had. She was keenly aware of the dual nature of the man.

She knew his greatness of heart and his implacability of temperament. She knew the heights and the depths of which this man was capable.

She knew that there was a demon lurking in him that it would be dangerous to rouse. And she knew that she and Owen Phelps had roused it tonight.

As for the consequences to Phelps, she cared little; the rascality of the man had long since torn the veil from her eyes, and she hated him as heartily as she had once adored him. Her soul was racked with fury because she had momentarily felt the physical attraction of the creature and allowed her own fate to be swung over an abyss down which she dared not look.

For a moment, after Kranach's proposal, her soul had almost sung aloud. Marriage with Kranach meant release from carking care that had stalked her all her orphaned, lonely life; and she had intended that it should mean great things for the surgeon, too. She had sensed and understood and sympathized with his vast loneliness—she had intended to cure all that.

She had dreamed even in that brief instant of the heights to which they would rise together, of the position in the best that society offers that she would make for them together — the dignity with which they would live side by side, the deep trust that each would know in the other!

And now her dreams lay in fragments about her because of that beast, that selfish hound, lying there unconscious at the mercy of the cleverest surgeon in the world.

"The bowl!" exclaimed Kranach. "There will be blood."

His ugly words were the more horrifying because of the savage tone in which he uttered them. But Edith hardly noticed this. She tottered back and forth across the room, stood beside him with the bowl and sponge, dabbed at the victim as he ordered her to do, and all the time she was thinking only one thing, trying to solve one ghostly problem:

"What will he do with *me?*"

If he did this with Owen Phelps —if his fury was so torrential that it could sweep away the honorable conduct of a lifetime, engulf his sense of decency, drag the demon from its lair and allow it full liberty with Phelps—what would he do to her?

WHILE Kranach worked, his eyes glowing with savage triumph, his

clever hands moving with incredible swiftness, his tall frame trembling with the rage that had shattered his soul, the boom of guns came nearer and louder; the roar and racket of bursting shells in close proximity returned.

The incredible piercing brightness of aeroplane searchlights flashed around their tent, "duds" fell near them. Again a shell dropped through the canvas shelter, burying itself far down in the earth and exploding there, so that it seemed as if a slight earthquake had occurred. The bloody water in the bowl rose from it, drenched Edith's immaculate uniform and spattered itself on Kranach, who miraculously worked on, impervious even to such a shock.

Instinctively Edith had reached out and grasped Kranach's arm for support. Without looking at her, he shook her off as if ridding himself of something vile. A moan escaped her dry lips, although in that wild uproar neither she nor Kranach heard it.

"More chloroform," he ordered, shouting like a wild beast above the din.

Phelps had moved a little, and Edith understood. With something like Kranach's own savagery, she pressed the sponge over Phelps' nose. He grabbed the bottle and literally drenched the man.

"God! If I should be killed before I've finished," groaned Kranach, as a perfect pandemonium of noise and lights was let loose about their tent.

Edith, watching him closely for some warning of what her own fate would be, above all for some sign of tenderness from him, read his lips, rather than heard his voice. She began to feel like one lost in a vortex. The maddening atmosphere of a nightmare was all around them.

They were caught, held in—there was no escape. In the midst of the turmoil the walls of their canvas shelter rocked and bellied inward, as fighting and dying men struggled around it.

There could be no escape now, she began to feel. It was useless to dwell upon what Kranach intended for her punishment. They would die together—they, and the bleeding victim of Kranach's long-controlled complex of jealousy against the successful male.

The thought brought her a kind of peace and, suddenly, a courage that she had thought lost. It was awful to die like this—like rats caught in a trap—but horrible, hideous, that the last act of a man like Kranach should be a criminal one.

She threw the bowl to the floor, grasping Kranach's arm and tugging at it.

"Stop, stop!" she shrieked above the surrounding hullabaloo. "You'll go to hell if you do this thing."

"I've lived in hell all my life," cried Kranach, his harsh voice almost sweet with satisfied hate. "You're too late. Bring me the bandages."

She brought them, stumbling about the tent, swaying against the cots, the table, crashing against the medicine cabinet which hesitated for an instant and then fell, shattered, to the floor.

"Hah!" Kranach grabbed the bandages from her hands. "That was right. That's the fitting touch—the final, fitting touch. Now, let who will be wounded. I can do nothing for anyone tonight!"

"There seems to be no one to do anything for," said Edith.

Her voice was grim now, too. She shrank from the surgeon as he seized the gauze and returned to the cabinet.

Diligently and swiftly she began

recovering some of the bottles and their contents. Here and there she saved a little liquid, picked up the gauze and cotton out of the mess, began arranging them in orderly fashion upon the operating table.

"No, there is no one to do anything for tonight, I guess," said Kranach.

In spite of his fury, his present occupation, he could not but notice that Edith, although racked with anxiety, with fear, was doing her duty as patiently and effectively as the best private does it under orders.

Doing her duty—while he——

"They're mopping up out there!" he cried savagely. "Hear them!"

EDITH paused in the centre of the tent, several bottles clutched against her breast. She listened, the horror growing in her eyes. The guns were quieting again, the lights had ceased to trouble the canvas shelter. While she stood there, motionless, a comparative peace descended once more. The retreat had gone on—or the Allies had rallied.

At any rate, that particular section was in the hands of a victor, and the battleground was being cleaned up! She knew those sounds, those sudden, feeble outcries, as the bayonet jabbed through the dying, calling them back from unconsciousness for one horrible moment.

She had heard them before. It had to be done. There was hardly enough room on the lorries for those who could live—and it was kinder to despatch those who couldn't than to leave them suffering there on the ground.

She thought of a pet dog who had once run gaily to her call across the street and got in front of an automobile. She remembered the surprise in his dying eyes when she failed to pick him up, while a policeman shot him.

Those boys out there—so near succor, trusting, gay in the face of danger, brave to do and dare—and now this hideous end. While men like Owen Phelps lived!

Somehow she reached the operating table and deposited the bottles.

Kranach had finished his work. He drew back, glaring triumphantly at Edith. The look in his eyes was near to insanity.

"A night to be remembered," he cried. "What? A night when anything might happen."

CHAPTER VIII

BANDAGES

A YOUNG officer stumbled through the tent-flap, tried to speak, lifted up something very bloody and fell unconscious to the floor. The lamps were sputtering to their end, in that distorting light that precedes dawn.

Men began stumbling or creeping into the tent; some holding a shattered hand, some dragging their broken legs, some holding an eye in its socket.

The Colonel came hurtling into the tent, pretending a strength he did not feel.

"A terrible night, Kranach," he cried, in a voice meant to be strong, that was only husky and feeble. "Lost my lieutenant—a fine boy, brave as they make them—shot through the heart, thank God! Although I haven't figured out yet how he could have been close enough to any Heinie with a pistol to do it. Found a tag by him—not his—some poor chap blown up, I suppose. Must remember to send it back to Paris for identification."

He held the tag—or, rather, the three on the wire with which each soldier was provided—uncertainly; his forehead wrinkled. He was finding it desperately hard to keep his mind on anything.

"And these boys here," he continued. "Do your best for them, Kranach—my brave boys."

"We—we won," whispered one young lad, holding his right eye in place. He saw that his colonel needed a little encouragement at the moment. "Don't forget, sir, if it was a horrible job, we won!"

"Right, lad," replied the Colonel. He smiled weakly. "Send you a lorry right away—get them all back to base hospital in a few minutes—that's all I came to say. What's that case?"

He had just noticed the cot with the covered form and the surgeon standing motionless beside it, spattered with blood, his reddened instruments in his hands.

"God, man!" exclaimed the Colonel, in deep admiration. "You—you don't mean to say you operated in the midst of that hell last night!"

Kranach's lips moved, but the officer failed to catch the mumble that came from them. He glanced more closely at the surgeon and saw that his eyes were staring, almost insanely.

The Colonel put his hand on Kranach's shoulder.

"What was this case, anyway?" demanded the Colonel. "Who is he?"

"Haven't found out yet. No time," muttered Kranach. "Lost his face."

"That's a bitter one," shuddered the Colonel. "Well, keep it up, if you can, old man—you're a marvel."

He patted the surgeon's shoulder in commendation, and went on his weary way.

THE BLOOD was coming back to Kranach's dark skin, the firmness to his voice. He nodded and turned away from the officer.

"Which one first?" he asked gruffly, of Edith.

"I—I don't know. They're all—so awful," she whispered. "I've stopped the bleeding, but I don't see how we're going to do it. You used all the chloroform—on him."

He had used all the chloroform on his wild, fantastic revenge—betrayed those brave lads who trusted in the "great" Kranach. His name was a by-word in the sector for the miracles he performed. And he had failed them tonight!

He had endangered the lives of those brave soldiers while he pandered to his hate. He was sending hopeless cripples, blind heroes back to life, to long suffering and incapacity, because Owen Phelps had been before him with the only woman who had ever loved him. That woman, too, who had minded her duty in the midst of a scene that would have sent most of her sisters to the madhouse, and with her heart bleeding—as he knew it must have been—because of his savage cruelty.

He sank down on the little white chair and buried his face in his hands. Something came under his nose.

"Smell the brandy," Edith ordered. "I can't spare any of it for you."

He thought he caught a slight emphasis on the personal pronoun, and he jumped to his feet.

"I don't want it," he said savagely. And he went to work.

"Never mind the chloroform," the boys whispered bravely, when he explained the fact that there was none.

"Just save my eyes," pleaded one boy.

"Don't let me be a cripple," came faintly from another.

"If we could stand that hell and live through it," suggested one, "we can stand a little more."

If they could stand that hell and live through it. They had done more—they had come clean through

it, with their white souls still unspotted, even as Marius had carried his through life, as his mother commanded—carried it "like a white dove, unspotted, through the market place."

While he—how had he come through that night? With a black crime upon his soul, with blood upon his hands, with the agony of these brave lads upon his conscience! They had come clean through, to this agony which they endured until Nature mercifully dropped unconsciousness upon them, while he had committed a crime. And that hound, lying there on the cot, his face a mess of bandages, had committed another—had wrecked another woman's life, had blackened another soul!

Kranach and Edith worked on until the woman fainted, and Kranach fell, heedless of her condition, on the ground, exhausted. But they had staunched the last wound, cauterized it, and bandaged it, and the boys had another chance for their lives.

THE LORRY was at the door as the nurse revived and raised herself, pale and emaciated, to her elbow. Kranach's great strength had saved him from further exhaustion and he sprang to his feet now.

With his own hands he lifted the wounded to the wagon's mattressed floor, while the regiment's hospital corps staggered after him with more burdens.

Edith had managed to stand up by the time he returned, and was leaning against the operating table.

"I—I'll heat some water, make some coffee," she said dully.

But the canteen was at the door and, seeing this, she staggered forward and tried to help pass the cups around. But the first one dropped from her fingers and she almost fainted again.

"That will do," said Kranach gruffly.

He caught her by the shoulders and held her. But she could feel no tenderness in his clasp.

"Drink some yourself," he ordered. "You've been magnificent, and you have done all you can. Think of yourself now."

He snatched a cup and held it to her lips.

She lowered her head over it, her eyes raised imploringly. His ugly face was brown with grime and streaked with blood.

But as he towered there above her, and she remembered all that he had done—the miracles he had performed handicapped now by meagre equipment—and the dreadful vengeance he had wrought, she remembered that she had thought him god-like one time.

And like a god she found him still—superb in his courage and skill, deadly in his revenge. All Phelps' fascination was once and for all swept from her heart, which still worshiped the man who held her fate in his hands.

"What are you going to do to me?" she asked faintly.

They stood apart now, almost alone in the tent.

Kranach looked into the coffee cup.

"I shall report your heroism to the Colonel," he replied.

His voice was without emotion or sympathy.

"And then?" she begged pitifully.

"Just now," he said, "I am going to send you back to the base hospital on this lorry."

"Oh, no," she protested.

SHE HAD not thought of that. She had had no notion that he would send her away. He had always said he could not perform his miracles without her. She had be-

lieved that at least he would keep her by him in his work.

She had no idea that he would ever forgive her for being less than he had believed she was. But, at least, she was so necessary to his work that he could not spare her there. She groped for his hand, but he managed to evade her.

"Yes," he said firmly. "You are all in. You couldn't stand another night like last night—and there is more coming."

"I won't go," she cried desperately.

She clung to his arm with a clutch that he found it hard to shake off.

But he tugged at her fingers as if he loathed her touch and, eventually, she let go in wounded pride.

"And you—you——" she began to whimper—fearfully weak and exhausted now with emotion as well as with fatigue, she was pitiful indeed. "You—if there's more coming—you're going to stay here alone?"

"Yes," he said, "alone. Hurry—they're waiting for you."

The last man had been tucked into the great wagon. The driver was waiting impatiently.

Edith shrank back, holding on to the side of the tent.

"I won't go," she cried with sudden strength. "I won't leave you—alone."

Kranach did not answer; without further protest, he lifted her in his arms and handed her to the driver's helper, who assisted in tearing the girl's hands from the surgeon's neck. They had seen such cases before, and thought nothing of it. The bravest women had gone a bit nutty after nights like the last. They couldn't feel too grand about anything themselves just now.

"Watch her," ordered Kranach. "See that she doesn't jump off."

The corporal nodded. Things like that had happened before, too. He thrust a capable arm around Edith's slim waist and held her firmly on the seat between himself and the driver.

The chauffeur threw in the clutch and started forward gently. There were those in the back to whom the least jerk might mean death.

Edith clenched her hands, for she felt consciousness slipping from her. In spite of the corporal she managed to lean around the corner of the wagon so that she could see Kranach as he turned wearily, catching at the side of the tent, and stumbling into it out of sight. Then she fainted again.

CHAPTER IX

TO THE BASE HOSPITAL

FARTHER on the road grew smoother and the chauffeur could drive faster. But even if he had dared to go at top speed he could not have gone fast enough for Edith. Flying was the only motion that would have soothed her then.

If she must be away from Kranach, must relinquish that transient dream of happiness as the honored wife of a great man, then she would like to get so far away that there would be nothing to remind her of the paradise she had glimpsed and lost. Later, of course, she knew that there was no place where she could forget.

A little Cockney who had been slightly wounded in the leg began to call out to the chauffeur, asking how long it would take to reach the base hospital.

"Longer than I like," the laconic Yankee answered him.

"Righto!" cried the cheery fellow. "Same here. Just the same, I've never been over this rocky road before—can't you give a fellow some idea?"

"Couple of hours," the corporal interposed, "if it's anything like last time. How's everybody back there?"

"Can't you hear?" cried the Cockney. "Not a sound out of 'em. Means they're either unconscious, sleeping or disgusted. Mostly the latter, I guess. Well, you *could* volunteer, my lads!"

Then he began to sing the "Slacker's Song":

"Send my father, send my brother,
Send my sister, send my mother,
But, for Gawd's sake, don't send me!"

At the second verse one or two feeble voices joined his. The corporal began to sing. Presently every man able to use his voice had added it to the Cockney's cheery tenor.

"What's the idea, mate?" he asked, as the chorus died away. "Ain't you singin' today? Just lyin' quiet an' sayin' nothin', eh? That's the idea, matey, that's the way to do it. Make out you're as bad as possible—then you'll get shoved back to Blighty."

Edith had noticed the absence of the voice that she knew, and glancing around now, she perceived that the Cockney was addressing Owen Phelps.

"Blighty," repeated the Cockney, "that's where I'm headed for—and don't you forget it. Had three years of it now, and couldn't get a Blighty to save my blooming!

"Larst night, in all that bloody row, what happened? Do I get my silly head blowed off? No! Do I lose one of my beautiful limbs—limbs is right, mates, according to the Ladies' Pictorial. No! Or is one of my perfect features annihilated? An eye missing?

"No—not even a tooth! Just a bite from a machine-gun bullet on me shin! What about the bally luck, eh? If it hadn't knocked me down, I'd never been here. But, then, I sees me chance! Lyin' there among the killed and wounded, I stuck me finger in the wound and made it something like! Now they'll have to send me back to Blighty!"

Edith turned her head away; she knew the man was not lying. She knew he was no coward, either. He'd been around that sector ever since Kranach had established his hospital there; she knew he was just weary of the carnage, tired of thinking about it, discouraged with his own heroism.

"So you lie still, matey," he was going on. "The stiller you are the better—the quicker you'll get to Blighty."

"Shut up," said a savage voice suddenly. "Don't you see the chap can't speak? Looks like he'd lost most of his face the way he's bandaged."

"Damned good job if most of us could lose our faces," replied the irrepressible Cockney—and he burst into song again, before the other soldier could answer.

THEIR road lay through the district that as the "Devastated Area" has afforded tourists so many thrills since the war. It had once been a prosperous farming country, with pleasant farmhouses, grazing cattle in wide fields, well-grown orchards, steepled churches, happy little villages.

The villages were there yet, with spaces where homes had been; the churches existed, mostly without their steeples, and many without much of the walls; the farmhouses had survived, with gaps in the walls, in most instances. But the fields were stubble, the orchards had vanished, the cattle had disappeared.

The weather had continued heavy and gloomy—the skies were gray, the spring wind was chilly. Edith forgot her own discomfort thinking

of the poor boys behind her, inadequately covered, hungry and suffering.

She thanked God for the cheery little Cockney who never relinquished his efforts at keeping the other men's minds off their sufferings throughout that whole dreary ride.

A distant booming reminded her of what lay still farther back, of the lorries that would follow this one down that shell-torn, desolate road, through that blighted country. And her thoughts swung back to that tall figure stumbling into the hospital tent.

She stared unseeing at the road ahead. It was more than likely that on some other lorry he, too, would follow along that road—suffering, going back to his "Blighty" for good; suffering with mental as well as physical anguish. And she would not be near to help, to comfort him. She would never know, in fact, until someone told her—or she saw a name that looked familiar in those long, long lists of killed and wounded.

She huddled down in her seat, her vision blurred, and now the Cockney's rollicking songs jarred on her sick soul.

Around a curve the chauffeur turned at last, sighting the chateau that was now a base hospital. Another lorry was there ahead of them, and they had to wait in the circular drive while it was unloaded. Then their own terrible ordeal came.

Kranach had commanded the corporal to take special care of Edith, but he forgot all about it in getting the wounded off their bed of torture and onto the comparative comfort of the cots in the hospital.

She had, in fact, recovered so much of her nerve and spirit that there was nothing to remind him. If he thought of her at all it was only to note that she was "almost as good as a man" when it came to handing these desperate cases.

In one of them she showed extra concern. She did not speak to him, and she quickly averted her own eyes from the glance that shot at her from his. There are some things the bravest cannot stand. But she saw to it that he was well placed, and did not flinch when she found that she must care for him.

Having made sure that her charge was all right, Edith herself let go. Hours later she became conscious of the fact that her constitution had reasserted itself, and that now she faced an ordeal unlike anything she had ever dreamed of.

CHAPTER X

COMPLACENT

THE TERRIBLE, the unbelievable thing she had to face, day after day, was the problem of Owen Phelps. Although he soon became able to utter a few words, he never spoke except to ask for water, or some necessary attention.

But she was conscious of his eyes everywhere. She became expert at avoiding any direct contact with them, but she could feel his glances across the room, through screens and doors.

After a few days she prayed that he would speak—reproach her, revile her, accuse Kranach of that wild, impulsive crime. To this end she finally, maddened by his restraint, his unnatural silence, lingered at his cot, and asked him a question.

"You—you lost your identification tag, I believe?"

She had intended looking him directly in the eyes, but failed at the last minute. She missed the frightened look that followed her question, and was surprised at the

way his voice trembled as he answered:

"Then you don't know who I am?"

Not know who he was? Had Owen lost his mind to ask her such a question? She hesitated, wondering seriously whether his reason had become unhinged.

"It is just as well," she heard him say. "I'd rather you didn't know."

She raised her eyes at last and looked at him. The glance that she had feared to encounter contained no malice, only anxiety.

"I suppose," he lowered his voice as he went on, "they'll send me back just the same, won't they? Whether they know who I am or not?"

"Yes," assented Edith faintly.

"That's all right, then," Owen continued, still in a whisper. "How soon do they take these bandages off?"

"In a few days now," said Edith, wondering that she continued to have the courage to speak to this man.

"What," asked Owen, raising himself a little, "what made my face so stiff at first?"

What had made his face so stiff? Edith felt herself growing faint.

"You—you haven't felt any pain, then?" she asked incredulously.

Owen shook his head, and motioned with his hand for her to draw nearer. She leaned over the bed, her hand on the crude iron rod at the back, clutching it for support.

"Of course," he whispered, "you do really know who I am!"

"Of course," she admitted.

"To oblige me, however," he went on, "you'll say that you don't?"

Edith nodded her head, puzzled.

"MIGHTY nice of old Kranach," he went on complacently, "to help me out like this. Especially as he knows——"

"Knows what?" demanded Edith. "About us?"

"Not that," replied Owen. "That wouldn't mean anything to him—he's too mad about you. Run away, now, I want to sleep. And, remember, you don't know who I am. Just a poor devil that crawled wounded into the tent—last night, wasn't it?"

"Last week," replied Edith dimly.

"And—get them to take these bandages off as soon as it's safe. I suppose you're leaving them on to hide the fact that I'm not really wounded."

"Yes," muttered Edith. "That's it."

"In that case," whispered Owen, "perhaps I'd better leave them on until I'm well out of this damned country. What do you say? Can it be managed?"

"I—I hardly think so," replied the girl.

She was staring down at this self-centered man, almost unable to believe her ears. Owen had as yet no idea of what Kranach had done to him. He believed that the surgeon had acted as his friend, had chloroformed him to save him from punishment as a deserter. He believed——

Well, she did not wish to be anywhere near him when he should learn the truth. She had supposed he knew, had thought the ordeal had changed him somewhat—that those haunting glances of his had been merely reproach. Whereas he had been only waiting for a chance to speak confidentially to her.

"Old Kranach," he continued, "is a pretty good sort. Especially as he knows——"

He broke off abruptly.

"Knows what?" she repeated, hardly interested in the answer, she was so busy with the problem of avoiding Owen when he should have

those bandages removed and encounter a mirror. "Knows what?"

His answer startled her and held her attention.

"Oh, something I did—that night—he saw me. But it's all right. The old chap is evidently my friend. Why, as a matter of fact, he did the right thing by me when Irene was hurt, too—helped me. I'd like to see him again—some day. In the meantime, how about getting me back to Paris before the bandages come off? Can you manage it?"

"I think so," Edith promised him—and then got as far away from him as she could. Most decidedly she wanted to get him back to Paris, or anywhere away from her before he should find out what Kranach had done to him—for, of course, he would not forget her part in it.

SHE CLASPED her hands together, and found that they were cold and moist. Her forehead exhibited the same temperature, or lack of it, and the same moisture; her limbs were trembling.

She had heard nothing of Kranach since that terrible night. There had been another awful engagement but, as their hospital was full, the lorries coming from that sector had gone elsewhere.

She did not know whether Kranach was alive or lying wounded in the other hospital—or still carrying on, alone and lonely in his tent. Alone—brooding, as she felt he would do, over the wrong Owen had done him, over the crime that he had committed himself.

He would not, she knew, feel any regret for Owen's sake, but only because he had soiled his own honor. And this mysterious something else that Owen hinted at—that Kranach had known of, had witnessed—knowing Owen as she did now, she was sure it had been ugly enough to justify the punishment he had received.

She tucked his confession away in her memory, and turned her attention to getting Phelps to Paris.

BUT—still another engagement had been fought and won, and other lorries were on their way. The new *blessées* could not stand the trip to Paris, room must be made for them at the base hospital. The present convalescents must go to the metropolis.

Edith found herself once more upon a lorry with Owen Phelps maintaining a complete silence while his comrades laughed and joked about the war and their wounds.

Most of the wounded were taken to the American Hospital at Neuilly, and Edith realized that there was no other place where she could go, and that still Owen Phelps was being sent to the same place!

Every element of Fate had combined to throw the onus of Kranach's crime on her. This was her punishment for ever having listened to the seduction of Owen Phelps.

In the American Hospital Phelps found things more to his taste; and he proceeded to make himself more comfortable by engaging a private room.

"As soon as I'm able to get out," he said, "I'll communicate with my attorneys and pay you."

The few private rooms were unused, and the nurses were only too glad to have an excuse to put this patient in one of them. The wards were full. Every inch of space was used, and yet there were never enough accommodations.

Men obligingly died every day to make room for other wounded, and still the place was overcrowded—system had given way to confusion. Owen Phelps was registered as an unknown *blessée*, yet they never

stopped to ask who he was when he engaged the room nor questioned his statement that he could pay for it.

He had managed to get Edith to accompany him to his room; there was no one interested enough to object, and she had gone, vowing that this should be her last lone interview with him.

"Now tomorrow," Owen was saying to her, "tomorrow, when everything's busy around here, I want you to take these bandages off—and then I'm going to slip out of here. No one's seen my face. No one will recognize me.

"There's a bank here that corresponds with mine in New York, and I'll be able to get all the dough I need. I'd just as lief hang around Europe for a while—and I suppose it would be dangerous——"

"Without a passport it would be impossible," Edith told him.

"I suppose so," sighed Phelps. "All right, then, just help me slip out of here tomorrow."

EDITH nodded confusedly and slipped out of the room. In the corridor she paused desperately. She did not know where to go, what to do.

When Phelps knew the truth he would accuse her as well as Kranach, that was certain—but she did not mind that part of it so much. She loathed the fact that Kranach's great name would be besmirched by a man like Owen Phelps.

Someone was coming along the corridor toward her—a young nurse in uniform. Edith saw that it was Irene Burton and stared in her utter astonishment.

The girl came up to Edith eagerly.

"I am so glad to see you again," she said. "You're such a heroine—so great—the world is talking of you and Doctor Kranach all the time. You saved my life and now you have saved so many others."

"I never dreamed of finding you here," said Edith Folsum.

"I had to come," sighed Irene. "I had known and loved France all my life. I had to come and help, as soon as I was able."

Edith was unconsciously drawing the girl down the corridor away from that room where Phelps brooded in his delusions.

"You've just come in on a lorry with a lot of wounded," Irene went on. "Come to the office and let me get you a cup of tea."

Edith accepted thankfully, while she pondered this new problem that Fate had thrust upon her. Ought Irene Burton to know who the man with the "lost face" was?

"There's one awful case, they tell me," Irene went on. "A poor chap who almost lost his face, and doesn't know who he is. His tag was lost."

"Yes," replied Edith mechanically.

They were in the office now, and one of the internes greeted Edith with enthusiasm.

"I say," he exclaimed, "I've been looking over the record of that chap in the private room, and I see that Kranach recommends the removal of all bandages today."

Edith could not answer for a moment. She saw that the interne had in his hands the private record which accompanied each wounded soldier from the date of his injury until his discharge. It was desperately like Kranach to send that after Owen Phelps—characteristic of his own indifference to consequences.

"I think," said the interne, "I'll go and do it now. Don't want to come along, do you?"

"In a minute," said Edith. "Miss Burton promised me a cup of tea."

She knew she was going to need a stimulant if she returned to that room. She recalled thankfully that there were no mirrors in it, and she knew that it was unlikely that any-

one would help Owen to get a glimpse of himself at present.

CHAPTER XI

STRANGERS

OWEN PHELPS remained patiently in his room, waiting for the morrow. Spring, which is usually so fair in Paris, had lost its character and was brooding dismally outside his window.

He turned away. His inner vision was much pleasanter. The future that he contemplated was pleasant, indeed.

He would not attempt to return to America; why should he, anyway? There was no one there he cared about.

It never occurred to him to ask himself whether anybody cared about him. It was a foregone conclusion that he was popular with women; he had little use for men.

His pleasant reveries were interrupted by the entry of the interne with the orderly.

"Hello!" exclaimed the interne cheerily. "How do you feel?"

"Fine," replied Phelps. "As soon as I get these bandages off——"

"That's what we've come to do," said the interne. "Take 'em off, and cut the stitches out, and give the wounds a chance to heal naturally."

Take the stitches out! Owen failed to understand. He had in mind only the necessity of retaining those disguising bandages until he could get away from the hospital. He jumped off the bed and protested with all his might.

"There aren't any stitches—they have been taken out," he exclaimed.

The doctor referred to a paper booklet he was carrying.

"Here is your record," he said. "'Part of face blown away; identification tag gone. Treated by Doctor Kranach. Operated on; recommends removing stitches eighth day.' This is the eighth day."

Owen was speechless with rage. What an ass Kranach was, after all, to make out the regular report for him! It had followed him all the way from Kranach's tent, apparently. Now they would remove those confounded bandages and find his fair, smooth skin beneath, without a blemish.

"No, no," he began to protest, whimpering. "I can't let you take them out—not you. I want to wait for Doctor Kranach—or that nurse of his. She said she'd be back tomorrow—Edith Folsum."

THE PHYSICIAN sighed and raised his eyebrows at the orderly. They caught hold of Owen as if he had been an infant and pinioned him to the bed.

"Orders are orders," said the physician quietly, and he proceeded to remove the bandages.

"No wonder," he added, as the incisions Kranach had made were disclosed to his view, "that you cannot remember who you are. You must have got a terrible shock. Now keep perfectly still. I'm beginning with these wounds around the eyes. The least move of my knife might blind you. Don't move."

Owen obeyed him, faint, bewildered. He was in a welter of horror and dismay. But he realized that this was no time for him to do anything but obey the doctor.

The physician counted the stitches as he cut them out—one, two, three, and so on up to sixteen.

"There you are," he cried at last. "A mighty clean job, too. You were lucky to fall into Kranach's hands."

Lucky to fall into Kranach's hands! He'd know in a minute; trembling horribly, he asked for a

mirror, and noticed, with terror, that his face felt as stiff as before the bandages had been removed.

The orderly glanced at the interne; should he bring a mirror or not? The young doctor shook his head surreptitiously. It was enough for them to see that hideous countenance. Too much for its owner.

Kranach had removed tissue from the right side of Owen's nose and drawn the bone over to the right; he had removed a bit of his upper lip and raised it in a kind of snarl. He had operated around his eyes so that there were mere slits of openings which wholly failed to reveal Phelps' eyes.

"Oh, you don't want to see a mirror today," protested the interne. "The wounds are not healed yet. We have to put on more gauze."

"No, no," protested Owen frantically. "Let me see."

But they paid no heed to his demand, and proceeded with their work. Yards and yards of gauze wrapped him around the eyes. He grabbed the gauze and tried to pull it away. His motion was unexpected and the bandages rolled away on the floor.

"I want to see," he insisted, his voice hoarse with agony, "what that devil's done to me! Get me a mirror."

THE ORDERLY had seized his arms again, and was pinioning them behind him. Two women were coming down the hall—two nurses.

In his anguish Phelps recognized them both—Edith Folsum and Irene Burton. Two women whose love he had won and thrown away. But that didn't matter; it was his experience that no woman ever ceased to love him.

If Edith had helped Kranach in some dastardly deed, as he was just beginning to suspect, she had been forced by that demon, doubtless. He could not believe that enlightenment had wiped him from Edith's heart.

And, as for Irene, she had suffered when he asked her to release him from their engagement—but he would make her happy now with a word. She would help him, if Edith failed.

"Irene," he cried, as the two women paused at the door.

The girl started and stared at this stranger. The voice was the rich, musical voice of Owen Phelps; he knew her name. But that dreadful face that glared at her across the room could never have been Phelps', she told herself. Allowing for all kinds of wounds, that was not he.

And if it had been, what right had he to call out her name, to appeal to her in that intimate way? He had turned from her in her great necessity, had sought her when she was practically dying, and forced her to give him up in wounded pride.

"Help me!" he exclaimed.

The orderly was holding his arms fast behind him; the physician was approaching him with more gauze.

"Now, then, my man," he was saying, "just a little more patience. In a few days we'll let you have all the mirrors that you want."

"Irene!" Owen repeated frantically.

The girl stared at the refractory patient for a moment, and then she turned to the interne.

"I have no idea who this man is," she said smoothly. "My name is Irene; but it must be a coincidence. He must have mistaken me for some one else."

She walked off, finding that Edith had preceded her.

"You don't know that man?" asked Edith.

Her voice trembled slightly.

"I don't think so," replied Irene, "although I should say that he looks as Owen Phelps might have looked if ever his true nature had been expressed in his features."

Edith looked at her more closely; there was more color in the girl's cheeks than usual. Her eyes had a suspicious brightness.

Presently she excused herself and disappeared for a while. Edith felt that she walked with an air of triumph. If Phelps had failed her in her hour of great need, she had pointedly failed him. Owen Phelps was beginning to reap the harvest he had sown.

"Have to watch this case," the interne was saying to the orderly back in Owen's room—and he had hardly gone off when Phelps began to repeat his demand for a mirror.

Could it be possible Irene had not recognized him? Was it as bad as that?

"Not today," the orderly objected. "And don't touch those bandages, if you don't want your face to be worse than it is. Mind me, now. That Kranach's a wonder—hardly ever leaves a scar. Just you have a little patience and everything will be all right."

IN THE agony of his ignorance Owen was forced to believe the man. It might easily be, he eventually reassured himself, that Kranach had made a few trifling incisions in his skin just to make their tale that he was wounded more plausible—in case, as it had happened, he should eventually fall into other hands.

The fact that Irene did not recognize him looked ugly; but, after all, he had seen a look in her eyes that denied her lips. She had known him, he was sure—but she had turned her back on him to satisfy some petty revenge!

Just because he had told her that he could not stand the thought of a crippled wife! A nice thing she was—he was lucky to have got rid of her.

And Edith! She had turned away—walked down the hall. But that might be diplomacy on her part. Owen Phelps had a naturally buoyant nature.

Before night he had persuaded himself, with the aid of the indefatigable orderly, that in a few days his face would be almost the same as ever, and that meantime Edith would show up tomorrow, and help him get out of this damned hospital.

But the next day arrived, as it was bound to, and Edith failed to come with it. Noon came, and there was no sign of her; night, and the morning of the next day.

The reassuring suggestion came to him that she might be ill, so he inquired boldly for her, and was told that she was too busy with really bad cases to attend to him. Again this reassured him somewhat—he was not considered a bad case, then!

CHAPTER XII

REVENGE—AND JUSTICE

AS the volume of war rose to its final effort, as the tide of wounded flowed stronger and heavier than ever, Kranach's hospital unit was wiped out. The surgeon enjoyed one of those miraculous escapes which characterized the great struggle.

But he did not pause to congratulate himself on that. He had not allowed himself any rest, and he wanted none now; rest would mean time to think and, as Edith had told him the day he engaged her, he wanted no time to think.

Such reminders as he had suffered had, however, been untinged with remorse, as far as Owen Phelps was concerned. Edith was the one to whom he owed retribution. She had loved that man and he had, after

all, asked her to marry him. He had had no right to interfere with the girl's happiness because she had mistaken admiration for love on that wild night when, as he had said, anything could have happened.

Her heroism recurred to him again and again. If he dreamed at all during those brief respites he was obliged to take, it was she who haunted his unconsciousness—in her white, stained uniform, her close-cropped dark brown hair framing her oval face, white with fatigue, her dark eyes black with horror and with grief.

So now, lest that silent, sorrowing, martyred figure haunt his days as well, he threw himself on the first lorry and returned to Paris to buy another equipment, if it could be bought, intending to return to the front—now much farther on—as soon as he had completed his purchases.

But there was no tent large enough to suit his needs; no cots left in the stores, in the manufacturers' warehouses. As for cabinets and operating tables, and all the luxuries of his first equipment, the doctors in Paris had long since forgotten that such things existed.

There was no time to put a man on a table, as a rule, had there been one, and no time to put medicines tidily away in cabinets. And as for the medicines! There wasn't a drop to spare.

Kranach gave up temporarily, cabling to America, and biding his time by making himself useful at the American Hospital.

ON THE first day the orderly went around with him to familiarize him with the patients' needs.

"This case will be glad to see you," said the man, as they approached Owen's room. "He's the chap who got his all over his face, and doesn't know who he is. You operated on his face."

Kranach did not answer, but a more observing man than the young doctor might have noticed that his right foot paused in air for an infinitesimal second; might have seen that his dark face stiffened into harder lines; that his eyes suddenly filmed and then blazed. He brought his foot down hard and strode faster to the door, flinging it open before the orderly could reach it.

Out there, at the front, he had had spells of wondering whether he were ever going to regret his act. But the mere sensing of the presence of the hound who had won the love of two of the finest women he had ever known, only to break their hearts, seemed to rouse again the serpent that had sprung before at Phelps' throat.

Phelps was brooding beside his window, but he turned eagerly as Kranach entered. The sky had been comparatively clear all day and now, at sunset, a rosy glow spread itself over Kranach, outlined against the white wall.

A great hope welled up in Owen's heart; Kranach had come to him! He would not have dared do this, Phelps surmised, if the operation had been as dreadful as the other doctor seemed to think—if it had not been really an expedient on Kranach's part to help him.

He had come, then, probably to undo the damage he had done—to help him back to civilization, to his old, dear, easy life of wine, women and song.

He would have extended his hand to Kranach but a kind of awkwardness fell upon him; and, in fact, the surgeon acted as if he were an animal he had experimented on for all the hint of greeting that came from him.

"Got your scissors?" he demanded

of the nurse who had followed Kranach and the orderly into the room. "I want to see what kind of a job I've made of this."

Again Owen would have spoken, but the nurse became voluble, telling Kranach how deeply interested everyone had been in this case, and getting a grumble from the surgeon that merely reminded her to do her duty. She did this by soothing Owen into a reclining posture on the bed.

NOW AND AGAIN Phelps felt a touch of steel and winced as Kranach pulled the adhesive tape away. He might be greater than the other doctor, Owen thought, but he was less tender.

"Now, then," said Kranach, drawing back, and smiling in a mirthless fashion, "bring him a mirror."

The nurse and orderly exchanged glances; Kranach's fame had led them to believe that he was as kind as he was great. Surely he must realize what effect it would have upon this nervous patient to see himself now.

"Can't you hear?" roared Kranach at the orderly. "A mirror! I want him to see what a good job I've done."

The orderly started, nodded and hurried away. The nurse laid a protesting hand on Kranach's arm; she tried to draw him away from the bed. Kranach remained at the foot of the cot, glancing down at her arm until she drew her hand away, embarrassed.

Owen was slowly rising to a sitting posture and as the orderly entered with the mirror he put out an uncertain hand to take it. That mirror for which he had prayed so fervently began to be something to fear.

Kranach reached forward and grabbed the little glass himself. With rare accuracy he held it up in front of Owen so that, small as it was, he could not fail to be suddenly confronted with all of his scarred visage.

For a moment Owen supposed that some stranger had entered and was looking over his shoulder. He glanced around involuntarily—and encountered the pitying eyes of the nurse. He stared at her for a second. Then he knew.

From somewhere he dug the courage to look again, to look long and steadily, noting even in his growing fury that the little mirror trembled in the strong fingers of the surgeon.

The orderly coughed.

"I've been telling him, sir," he remarked suggestively to Kranach, "that he won't always look like that—that most of his face will come all right again."

Kranach threw the mirror on the table.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, grinning without mirth again, "but I was forced to go too deep, to cut away too much tissue. Our patient will never regain his former beauty."

The nurse gasped in annoyance. If those frank doctors only knew the work they made for nurses! As if a little hope could hurt anyone. She'd closed many a poor chap's eyes that believed he was only going to sleep—at last.

She exchanged glances with the orderly. Kranach might be great, but he was a savage.

"There is no necessity for further bandaging," Kranach went on. "And as you are in no way incapacitated by the change in your features, there is no reason why you should be here. The question is what are we to do with you? Have you any money?"

BEYOND Kranach another figure

had come into Owen's line of vision —the nurse who had helped this monster to ruin him. Edith Folsum, who had once worshiped the very ground he walked on. Owen began to fumble at the hospital suit he was wearing, forgetting that he was out of uniform, without arms.

"You're lucky!" he cried, turning on Kranach, "you and that woman. If I had a pistol, you'd pay for this —you two."

Kranach turned, smiling to the nurse and orderly.

"Leave me alone with this man for a few moments," he said. "I think I can reason with him."

But Phelps jumped across the bed and laid his hand on the orderly's arm.

"No, don't leave me alone with him," he begged. "I'm afraid to be alone with him. You don't know this man."

The orderly stroked the patient's hand and grinned at Kranach. He gradually eased the man's fingers from his arm and went out. As he and the nurse left the room Edith entered and closed the door, standing with her back against it.

"You, too," cried Owen in futile fury. "You call yourself a woman to let this beast do this thing to me?"

"Do you call yourself a man," interposed Kranach, "to do the things you did to her and to Irene Burton?"

"Revenge, a monstrous, dirty revenge—the great Doctor Kranach is capable of it! Wait till the world knows that!"

Owen was shaking with his helpless fury. He began to pace the room like a slim caged leopard.

"Yes, I am capable of that," said Kranach. "I am also capable of assisting justice. That is all I did in your case. If, instead of operating on you and sending you back to Paris and safety, I had called the corporal's guard and turned you over to them——"

"Turned me over—to the corporal's guard?" cried Owen.

He paused in his wild pacing. His ugly face, with its twisted nose and lips, its eyes narrowed to mere slits by Kranach's art, assumed deadly palor.

"Yes, you," said Kranach in a low tone that was weighty with threat. "Just before you crawled into my tent an officer was shot by a man trying to desert. The bullet went clean through his heart. But even as he fell he grabbed at the man to try and hold him, and dragged his identification tags away. They were found in his hand. I found them."

Owen Phelps stood motionless now facing Kranach.

"You found them," he whispered. "You saw——"

"You know I saw you," said the surgeon. "Now, what do you want to do? Come with me to the colonel, to headquarters here, and I shall only be too glad to show them these."

He held up the three tags held together by the thin lead wire.

Owen backed away from him. He was trembling again, but with fear now, not with rage.

"No, no," he whimpered. "Don't do that. Don't make me suffer any more. Surely I have paid—must pay all my life——"

"Right!" agreed Kranach. "That's what I wanted—to make you pay all your life for the lives you have ruined—and taken. If I had not thoughtlessly involved Miss Folsum in this I would not keep quiet about your officer. But she, too, has suffered enough. And I do not want her to suffer any more through me. We could not settle our score without it. What is it to be?"

"No one knows about those tags—no one knows—" stammered Owen.

"Not a soul but myself," Kranach assured him. "Shall I tell them?"

The other man threw himself upon his cot, face down; he lay there shaking for a moment. Then he rose up.

His lips were trembling so he could hardly speak. And Kranach towered triumphantly above, looking to Edith's adoring eyes more like a god than ever.

"I take it," said Kranach, with his hard, grim smile, "that what you would like is to get out of here, to be discharged, and go your way."

"Yes," murmured Owen. "That's all I can do. You've got me. I'm helpless. I accept your terms."

A frown swept across Kranach's face like lightning, but he swallowed the insult for Edith's sake.

"Very well, then," he said. "And remember, don't ever let your way be my way. Never come in sight of me—or mine—again."

"I should be unlikely to do so," sneered Phelps.

"Go, then," said Kranach. "Go down to the office and wait for me. I will sign your discharge. The orderly will lend you some clothes. You can get back to Paris and to your bankers by the tramway. In the meantime, I suppose you will accept your carfare from me?"

Kranach had drawn some francs from his pocket and offered them to the other man. Edith watched incredibly as Owen calmly took the coins from Kranach and stowed them into his pocket. Then, without a word or glance at her, he hurried out of the room.

EDITH had been standing against the door and had drawn away, opening it to make Phelps' egress all the swifter. Now she closed it again and faced the surgeon.

"If I could only make up to you," she said, "for the thing I made you do—for the memory I have given you because of my temporary weakness that dreadful night——"

Kranach stood for a moment looking across the dreary landscape. The air was still full of war, although he knew the combat was drawing to a close. Aeroplanes still circled, droning gloomily above the city, on guard for its safety; Big Bertha occasionally shot into the heart of Paris.

Soon they would all be back in America, in New York, walking up and down Fifth avenue in the mauve twilight, on Broadway at night, with the bright lights brighter than ever. All this hell would be a nightmare, to be forgotten. All the deeds men had done would be forgotten—the heroic ones with the others.

But there was one thing he would never forget, that out of it all he had dragged one heart to love him at last. He turned around and took Edith in his arms.

"I shall never think of it again," he promised her, "as long as you love me."

Just as it would have escaped him, Joe's arm shot out.

Creole Joe

By EDWINA MacDONALD

You'll love the strange fantastic dreams of CREOLE JOE and you'll hate the cruel things that Fate brings to him. In this story of the Delta country Edwina MacDonald has written of the hearts of the Creoles with an understanding and love that make their successes and failures very real to the reader.

THERE had never been any doubt in the mind of Creole Joe that it was more glorious to be a dead hero than a living Creole.

This conclusion was not due to the decadence of the Creoles that followed that abomination known as the Louisiana Purchase which converted French territory into an American possession.

Nor did his feelings bear any relation to the fallen fortunes of his own family. It was an inner sense of the significance of things which he could not have explained.

He was first made dimly aware of it when his Uncle Jean took him down the river to New Orleans.

He stood, very small and very wretched, gazing up at the high marble monument which proclaimed to the world that Major General Louis Andrea Bourdet had died that New Orleans might live, and in dying had covered himself and his descendants with immortality.

The boy envisioned the grand military burial, the tears, the firing of guns, the funeral wreaths; and he felt that in some strange way he, the grandson, had been cheated of the one thing which made life worth while.

A vast aridity of soul seized him. As the great, greedy river now and again razes some small town, leaving a blank page where but yesterday was teeming life, so the boy's mind was razed of past impressions as he stood before the record of his family greatness. It

was as if he had been new-born in that moment. Nothing else had ever been.

And out of the aching conglomerate mass of wordless ideas and emotions that assailed him, two emerged and persisted—as two sturdy trees emerge and persist after the débris of a flood has disappeared.

THE first was reached by way of a series of pictures: Here was Saint Louis Cemetery, once so grand, like *Nouvelle Orleans*, its splendor disintegrating, even as the city Bienville had built was disintegrating.

The proud marbles were blackened and fissured, many of them lying in a crumbled heap on the ground; some were already sinking into the Mississippi muck on which New Orleans preens.

Even the valiant record of Louis Andrea Bourdet showed ugly seams and leaned grotesquely toward the mocking soil. In a little while it would fall and be swallowed up with the illustrious bones.

Joe had a clear vision of this disaster. There must, of course, be a new monument to take its place. But how could there be, since no Bourdet was rich enough to erect one? And no city can be expected to raise new monuments to old heroes when there are new heroes to be taken care of.

Obviously, there must be a new hero in the Bourdet family.

His second conclusion was that he, Joseph Andrea Bourdet, must die gloriously. This was not an idea struggling up through a mass of débris—it was an emotion. Clean-cut—positive—deathless.

UPON his return to Saint Annesville, where he lived in a small shack with his Uncle Jean and his Aunt Suzanne, Joe went at once to Sacco's Marble Yard on the outskirts of town.

One of the tombstones fascinated him. It was so tall that you could see it for miles, even above the squat roofs of the houses if you happened to be on the levee which wound to the east and west and north. Its pure white marble glittered in the sunlight, as Joe imagined the ice mountains of the far north must glitter.

It had been made for a man on his own order. The man had died before it was complete, and his greedy heirs had refused to take it. So there it had stood as long as Joe could recollect, too expensive for purchase by the river folk.

Inspecting it with longing eyes, Joe's sense of his own futility as a living boy grew to a beleaguring ache. It seemed to him that God had dealt unfairly with him in bringing him too late to a life where nothing was left to do but to work at Felton's Brick Kiln in spring and summer and shoot ducks for market in winter.

He determined, nevertheless, that he must acquire that monument to the honor of his family. Not with gold, but by right of conquest. It must be the gift of a proud and grateful people—a symbol of honor which would make men realize the importance of Joseph Andrea Bourdet. Make them recall his illustrious *grandpère* and link all Bourdets with the two great ones.

Sometimes he talked with heroes of the Civil War, shabby old fellows living on charity and in ignominy. Nobody bothered so much as to look at them.

And it came to Joe that no man could remain a hero who had the misfortune to go on living after great deeds. Death was the only guarantee of continued glory. Since this was so, he resolved that when

Joseph Andrea Bourdet's great hour came he would die!

UNHAPPILY, Uncle Jean died of fever when Joe was twelve, and he was promoted to head of the family. But when not occupied earning a living for *Tante* Suzanne and his six small cousins he toiled in the privacy of his little shed-room working out his plans with toy soldiers carved by himself of cedar. He made a crude map of the valley and forest back of Saint Anneville and moved his armies over it as his adored Little Emperor used to do.

He had, however, many uneasy days over his monument; went often to visit the marble yard, sick with fear lest some one had purchased it. Also his sense of having been cheated by life grew increasingly. With the whole country at peace it now appeared that to die gloriously was no longer possible.

MEANWHILE Joe reached twenty, and no hero had come out of Louisiana great enough to rob him of his monument. Daily its tall spire-like top encouraged and inspired him from afar when he was bagging ducks for market.

Of late he had avoided the boys of Saint Annesville who, having become men, talked as if girls were more important than a great death. Life had no interest for Joe except as it offered opportunities for death.

It was therefore most confusing to come all in one moment upon a girl one had known always and to find her more beautiful and more important than death.

It happened on a morning in February. A penetrating fog had come up the river, veiling the squat town drowsing behind the levee in ghostly white. Joe was returning from the bayou. He was tired, hungry, cold, and the fog bit into him.

Over one shoulder he carried his ducks tied together in two big bunches, one of which hung in front, one down his back. On the other shoulder he carried his gun and rifle.

In spite of the cold penetrating his worn coat he paused to look back at the bayou. His mournful black eyes rested on it lovingly, regretfully. Soon the season would be over and he must go back to the brick kiln.

For some minutes he stood still, revolving this thought. It was as quinine on the tongue. With a lugubrious sigh he turned himself again toward town.

Then he saw her coming down the road on her spirited bay mare. This was no new sight. Often he met her in the early morning. Perhaps it was the fog which made her look different. He noticed it at once. She appeared less glowing. Less alive, perhaps. Like a lovely ghost coming out of the ether to warn him of an impending crisis.

He was immediately conscious of the warning. It spoke to his inner self in a sudden uprush of blood which warmed his cold body. It roared in his ears and hammered inside his heart. He was no longer aware of the weight on his shoulders, the weariness of his legs, or the emptiness of his stomach.

She drew the bay up sharply. "Good-morning, Joe," she called. "No other man that I meet coming in from the bayou ever has as many ducks as you."

"No other man is fine shot like me, thass so," he stated with elation. He was very thin and very pale, with great dark eyes that seemed to mourn up at her.

"You aren't modest, are you?" she laughed.

A SMALL thing was Mary Lou Felton, with pale hair. And looking up at her Joe swiftly assembled her piquant little face into a most

charming bouquet of blue-bells set in peach blossoms, with yellow jonquils for a background. It was strange he had never before noticed how like she was to the flowers he loved best. And the knowledge bursting thus upon him made him boastful.

"It is a great pity for those Civil War that I am not a man those time. It have not las' so long, thass so, yes. Me, I can shoot one duck's eye out. Then how those Yankees they stan' up in a row befo' me? Ha! They don' stan' long, I tell you. When Joseph Andrea Bourdet he lif' he rifle—ping, ping—one, two, tree, fo'! Down those Yankees they go like toy sojers in one row."

"Why, Joe, you're a poet!" Mary Lou giggled, holding with some difficulty the bay, who wheeled around and around in her impatience to be off. "You said one, two, three, fo', down they go like sojers in a row."

He smiled, white teeth flashing unexpectedly in his dark face, but leaving the sad eyes untouched. "Oh, it is nothing. Me, I am ver' smart man. Biccause why I am great-great-grandson of Monsieur le Major General Louis Andrea Bourdet. You know heem, yes?"

"I don't believe I do. Tell me about him."

He did. In words that burned. All his shy gravity dropped from him as he relived for her those stirring days when his people had been one of the grand families of *Nouvelle Orleans*, and his illustrious *grandpère* had won the battle of New Orleans for General Jackson.

He put down his ducks, his bird-gun, in his eloquent excitement and, using his rifle as a bayonet, slaughtered a whole line of British before Mary Lou's astonished eyes.

Darting, now here, now there, shouting orders to great historical names, telling the picturesque La Fitte where to close in and exhorting his men, he stepped over the dead and dying to reach those cowardly British in the rear; even giving orders to General Jackson himself.

At last it was over.

Joe tossed his rifle into the dry ditch and, rolling in after it, lay for a moment, eyes closed, in the ecstatic belief that he had indeed fallen in battle.

So exciting and amazing had been the performance that Mary Lou had quite forgotten to giggle. Now she called out sharply: "Joe!"

He climbed out of the ditch somewhat shamefacedly, smiling up at her in shy apology. He had enacted the whole scene so often in the woods that, carried quite out of himself by this strange new emotion, and his desire to impress her with his family greatness, he had lost himself entirely.

"My goodness, Joe," she cried. "It was so real I thought for a minute you were dead. You ought to be an actor. Why, I could just see the whole thing. I'm going right home and read all about it. Is your grandfather mentioned in the school history?"

"But yes. You have not see the name Louis Andrea Bourdet?" he asked in pained surprise.

"Seems as if I have," she admitted.

"*Mais oui*, how you study in those public school an' you don't see hees name? It is there fo' all to see. Thass so, yes."

AFTER that they often stopped in the road to talk. She tried to get him to enact that stirring scene again for her. But his shyness would not permit him.

She had read about the great battle and seen his ancestor's name. It was enough that she knew now who he was. His game weighing heavily but unfelt on his slight form he

would stand looking up at her—so pretty and proud on her impatient bay.

Sometimes he was so shy he knew not what to say. But again he would grow confidential.

"You have see that tall monument in Mr. Sacco's marble yard?" he asked one day. "When I shall die as my *grandpère* did, to the honor of my family, I will have that one for my own self. Thass so. Me, I am goin' to be great man, yes. Then all the people they come to my funeral an' set that tall monument on my grave for say 'This is Joseph Andrea Bourdet, who have die a hero like hees *grandpère* in the great battle.'"

"But," she questioned practically, "how will you do it? All the wars are over. I don't think there ever will be any more. And you can't get a monument like that for just saving some person's life, or something. You have to save a lot of people. Big heroes are mostly all dead by war."

At this he grew confused, hinting darkly that she, being a woman, could not know what was going on in the hearts of men at this very moment. He intimated that it was because of these dark, secretive things that he always carried his rifle as well as his bird-gun. He must be ready when the time came to lead his command. For how could a general lead his men to victory if he himself was not a crack shot?

He spoke bravely; but in secret he apostrophized the terrible pass the world had come to and his own ill luck in having been born so inopportunely. For he loved Mary Lou as no man had ever before loved a woman. This he admitted to himself. And he swore solemnly that, however execrable the times, he must acquire that tombstone.

IT MAY seem strange that he could relate his love for Mary Lou in his mind with death. But not, of course, if you understood the viewpoint of the bayou people.

The Feltons were not "big rich", as the saying goes in the bayou country. They were not even one of the "Old Families". Indeed, in point of family, the lovely Mary Lou was greatly the inferior of Creole Joe.

As a matter of fact, she was the daughter of a "leading citizen" of Saint Annesville and was, herself, the belle of the town, and some said the entire parish; while Joe was as far beneath her as the yardman, or the family chauffeur.

"White Trash" come up—that's what the Feltons were. But White Trash come up is especially scornful of Old Families gone down.

Thus marriage was not even dimly considered by Joe. Death was the only solution.

He did not think morbidly on this as young lovers are sometimes wont to do. He had too long associated the idea with a glorious beginning of the real life which is immortality to view it as a tragic end. At the same time he was not above an earnest desire to distinguish himself in her eyes while still living.

But even in small ways fate mocked him.

One morning when he was trying to think out lesser ways in which a man might distinguish himself in the eyes of a woman, opportunity arrived unexpectedly.

A little girl was set upon in Front Street by a great police dog not twenty feet from where Joe stood. Without thought of heroism, or of the fact that Mary Lou was just emerging from the bank, he dashed to the rescue.

Instantly the dog turned on him, knocked him down as if he were a

fly under a swatter and—oh, humiliating fact—he himself had to be rescued by Henry Marvin, a young giant who worked in the bank.

Marvin, hearing Mary Lou scream, ran out, sprang onto the dog's back and choked him into insensibility. Joe, his clothes in rags, blood pouring from half a dozen wounds, slunk from the horrified sight of Mary Lou.

AND NOW shooting season was over. Joe went no more to the bayou before dawn. He met her no more on her rides. There were game laws which forced one to turn to other pursuits. So for more than six months each year he must work at the brick kiln.

He hated the kiln with a blighting and devastating hatred. It humbled his pride that a Bourdet should sack and haul sand, load and drive trucks, tend fires or whatever came to hand. For, due to the fact that the moment the shooting season opened Joe always left his place, he had never advanced to a settled job, but filled in wherever needed.

That he submitted to this humiliation was because *Tante* Suzanne and his six young cousins must be fed. For himself, he would have starved before taking orders from men who were so far beneath him.

Supplying the market with game, while not a glorious profession was, nevertheless, a free man's work. Nobody told him when to begin, where to go, what to do, or when to stop.

When he was on the bayou or in the woods he was Joseph Andrea Bourdet, grandson of Louis Andrea Bourdet. At the kiln he was Creole Joe, one of Mr. Felton's "hired men".

And to make matters worse this year, Mr. Felton was Mary Lou's father. Of course he had always been her father; but the fact had assumed new importance.

Joe's heart was heavy with the injustice, the sardonic humor of his situation as hired hand to a man who could not have entered the house of his ancestors by the front door.

Thus love and resentment, a sense of futility, and also a devastating hate were at work beneath his gentle exterior. For next to his love for Mary Lou he hated Henry Marvin, the blond giant who had saved his life, and who now sat on the gallery with Mary Lou of evenings, or drove about town with her in a green roadster.

OFTEN Joe, driving a truck-load of sand to the kiln, would meet them. And the world would go red. If he could have smashed into them with any degree of certainty that she would escape and Henry be maimed for life, it would have given him great pleasure.

Oddly, his hatred of Henry did not encompass the man's death. Joe's murderous impulses were wholesale, and for purposes of salvation such as war afforded.

But better even than maiming Henry would be to show him up as a white-livered quitter, which Joe was convinced his rival was, in spite of the incident with the dog—since plenty of help had been at hand.

If only the Felton house would catch fire some night when Henry was sitting on the gallery with Mary Lou. She would rush into the house to awaken her mother and father upstairs.

Immediately the stairs would burst into flame. Of course Henry would dash out like the great coward he was and Joe, who by a miracle would be in the neighborhood, would leap boldly up the blazing stairs and rescue the three of them.

Maybe he would die of his burns after she had nursed him so sorrowfully, pleading with him to live for

her sake. Even old man Felton might plead with him not to die.

When it actually did happen that the Felton house caught fire, it was in the middle of the night, and Joe was in New Orleans on a pilgrimage to view his illustrious ancestor's toppling monument.

Worse still, that *bête Americain*, Henry Marvin, dashed to the fire and rescued Mary Lou's spitz dog at the risk of his life when she screamed out that Marco had been left. Henry had some very bad burns and Mary Lou visited him at his home every day carrying flowers and many delicacies.

After this, fate seemed to be laughing at Joe. He loaded and hauled sand, tended the ovens, and brooded in secret.

ONE Saturday afternoon he met Mary Lou and Henry in one of the back streets. They were both on horseback. Joe was walking, his rifle over his shoulder.

Mary Lou reined her horse. Unlike most White Trash come up, she did not give herself airs, and was friendly with every one. Henry, however, was not pleased, and scowled down at the shabby young Creole in whose veins such proud blood ran.

Henry Marvin was not a native of Saint Annesville, nor even of Louisiana, but had come from St. Louis to be cashier in the bank. So naturally he knew Joe as a shiftless fellow who would not work steadily, was half starved and seemed always to be brooding over his wrongs, and plotting deviltry. This was the natural mistake of the stranger.

Joe was not half starved. He could not put on fat, nor take on color. And it was not his fault that his eyes mourned in his pale face. This was the heritage of Spanish ancestry.

Moreover, Joe's plotting was for the most part impersonal and heroic. But these things being unknown to the young man in smart riding togs, he said, "Come on, Mary Lou."

"If Mary Lou she weesh for speak with me," said Joe mildly, "how you goin' preven' her? Me, I weesh fo' speak with her also. An' a Bourdet, what he weesh he have him, thass so."

As he spoke Joe picked up a small piece of brick and, tossing it up into the air, riddled it. Four shots rang out, and four times bits of brick flew apart.

It was a striking performance, and Joe's polite little way of telling the *bête Americain* that Joseph Andrea Bourdet was a man who would brook no nonsense.

BUT HIS courtesy in thus speaking the violence he felt through the mouth of his rifle had an unexpected result. Mary Lou's horse, never very patient, hearing four shots in such rapid succession that almost they were one, concluded that the conversation had taken an unpleasant turn and bolted.

Mary Lou was a fine horsewoman but the bridle, lightly held, was snatched from her hand by the wild toss of the horse's head.

For one moment Joe stood frozen. Then he was after the girl like the wind. Swifter, however, was Henry. He succeeded in catching her in a very short space and grasping the loose bridle.

The surprised and frantic bay reared, jerking Henry from his own mount and flinging Mary Lou into the ditch.

Joe, whose legs were almost as fast as his eye and trigger finger, came up just as Henry dropped to the ground with a broken arm. Joe did not so much as glance at the young man lying in the road as

if dead. He stumbled into the deep ditch which, though dry, was soft. He did not attempt to climb out with Mary Lou, but sat down, gathering her against his breast, and began pouring out his love, his agony and desolation, in a torrent of French.

He forgot his *grandpère*, his name, his family, all those things which required an heroic death of him. He forgot that an unalterable fate which sent the great ones of earth down and White Trash up separated them.

"To think," he moaned, "that I who would have died for you have killed you! I who love you as only the great ones of earth have loved! Oh, my little one, come back!"

His eyes were blinded so that he did not observe the flutter of the white eyelids almost as soon as he gathered her in his arms, nor the faint smile that touched her lips to be quickly erased.

"Mother of God, save me my precious one," he prayed, beating his breast with his fist. Then he fell to berating the saints, demanding to know what they were about that they could permit this tragedy.

"There is but one thing to do," he said at last. "I shall lay you down for a moment, my sweet, and go back up the road for my gun, which I dropped. Then when I have returned I shall lay my worthless life down here beside you in this ditch."

He moved as if to carry out this threat—and instantly a pair of dew-washed bluebells were lifted to his face.

"Ah, heart of mine, you live!" he cried. Then he recollected that Mary Lou spoke French very well for an American, and understood it even better; and his pale face burned dark red.

But she seemed not to notice. "What are we doing in here, Joe?" she asked.

He told her in violent and picturesque English, with many returns to the more facile French, how he—like the fool he was—had frightened her horse, who had thrown her into the ditch. He also declared that had she died he would most certainly have killed himself.

She sat up laughing. "But to die by one's own hand in a ditch, Joe, is neither heroic nor romantic," she declared. "You would never have won that fine monument out at Sacco's Marble Yard."

He wanted to tell her that to die beside her in a ditch would be more glorious than to save a nation and acquire the tallest marble shaft in the world. But shyness enveloped him. He could but smile mutely.

SUDDENLY she seemed to recollect something. "Henry! Where is Henry?"

Joe shrugged. "In the road up there." He indicated the road above their line of vision.

Her face blanched. "In the road?" There was a note of terror in her voice. "Is he—dead?" She scrambled to her feet.

"Me, I don't know," replied Joe casually. "I expec' so."

She was trying to find a foothold in the straight side of the ditch. He put his hands under her arms. Grasping a stout willow, she drew herself up to the road. Joe followed easily.

There lay Henry, his big form prone in the road. The two horses were nibbling grass beside the ditch on the opposite side, and some distance beyond him.

And now a dreadful thing happened. As Joe had flung himself into the ditch beside Mary Lou, so she flung herself into the dusty road beside Henry Marvin, weeping.

The man was not dead. He had simply broken his arm and lay there like a great baby waiting to be picked up. So it appeared to Joe.

"My arm's broken. I think I fainted," said Henry with a groan as Mary Lou bent over him with streaming eyes.

Joe spat viciously into the ditch. Pah! A man who faints because of a broken arm! And then lies in the dust groaning for women to weep over.

But Joe's heart was black with hate and envy over that broken arm. That this great hulking man should have the so great privilege of breaking an arm for her! Ah, this was too much! Truly life had a spite at Joseph Andrea Bourdet.

He caught Henry's horse, helped him mount; also helped Mary Lou, and watched the two of them ride back to town again.

AFTER this incident it was remarked by the people of Saint Annesville that Creole Joe had undergone a great change.

Always reserved, he had, nevertheless, in his shy, grave way been friendly to all. Everybody knew him and loved him. He was not convivial in the sense of the Frenchman.

He was not looked upon as a young man of any great ambition or possibilities. And but for the fact that he had managed in his quiet way to keep his Uncle's family together, he would have been considered shiftless. He boasted sometimes of his family greatness, but did not take on airs about it, and seemed content to let it remain a matter of history.

But now he glowered at his friends, ignored dogs who came to his hand to be patted. He boasted loudly of the grandeur of his ancestors, took on a grand manner and seemed to hold in contempt all who could not point to some valorous forebear.

He spoke bitterly of upstart Americans who had acquired money, and was heard to wish that the "foreign" cashier of the local bank who wore his arm in a sling might not recover from his hurt.

This was revolutionary, since the outstanding trait of Joe's life had been an almost tearful tenderness toward the hurt of men and animals. Even an enemy became a friend if sick or disabled.

But so wretched was he that only by hurting others could he ease his own pain. He was a man especially marked for ignominy. A foreign cashier was more privileged than he.

Everybody looked at this person wearing his arm in a sling and said: "He is a fine fellow. He wears his arm in a sling because he saved Mary Lou's life after that Creole Joe had stampeded her horse."

Yet, for all that he felt obliged to hurt his friends, Joe's heart ached with a great desire to serve them grandly with the sacrifice of his life.

The while he went about the necessary business of loading sand into sacks and hauling to the kiln, tending the ovens as his inferiors chose to order him, he planned magnificent battles.

HE RECALLED a story of a man named Aaron Burr, of marvelous personality and silvery tongue, coming down the Mississippi to inflame the Louisianians into rebellion.

If only he, Joe, had a marvelous personality and a silvery tongue it might not be so difficult even now to start a rebellion in a state which belonged to the United States by right of filthy gold—never in heart.

He had visions of inflaming men's hearts in Saint Annesville—himself,

quite naturally, leading one side in a civil war against the other. The war would spread. The state would no doubt send troops. The river folk would resent this as interference in their affairs and become one people against the state troops.

The whole United States might be involved. Was it not always in some small way, some out-of-the-way place that wars were brewed?

All the countryside back of and around Saint Annesville he converted into a battlefield for the restoration of his people's rights as Frenchmen, or Democrats, or any expedient cause which might contribute to war and involve their safety.

But even here life had cheated him. However valorous his heart, however great his prowess with a gun, his tongue lacked fire, his person carried no force.

If, as we are told, thoughts are things, and every great gift to man and civilization has first come by way of thought, it was probably not possible that a young man could think and dream for years in vain, giving heart and mind to a purpose which was so beneficent to his fellows; involving merely the sacrifice of his own life. For never did Joe's battles include the death of his followers. The enemies, yes. And for himself. Then peace and plenty for his people. The marble shaft for Joseph Andrea Bourdet.

WHEN Creole Joe's great hour came, it was in a manner and at a moment unforeseen, unimagined even remotely in his vast assemblage of possibilities.

Yet all the time it had been there—an ever-present enemy that has perhaps taken more human toll in Louisiana than all the combined wars. An inevitable and tremendous menace going its way in gurgling quiescence while men built their ramparts; rising up now and again to laugh in their faces. Showing them in one fell swoop how puny is man.

Since March thousands of tons of water had been charging down the river. Work in the fields had been abandoned as the dark flood between its confining dikes rose higher and higher.

All the low land seemed to shrink deeper within itself in an effort to escape the ancient enemy peering down at it, drooling to every wind in streams that slithered over the high embankments as if the chortling monster were making sport of its victims before its grand descent upon them.

Scores of men patrolled the levees in the lower parishes day and night. Railroad bridges were giving and women and children were being sent out of the Delta country. Though there had been no break in the levees as yet, the land was being inundated by back waters from the bayous. And fear stalked the riverfronts.

BUSINESS was practically abandoned in Saint Annesville, its neighboring towns and villages. White men and black, rich and poor, worked shoulder to shoulder sacking sand and dirt, loading it onto trucks and speeding it to the levees, every foot of which was under surveillance.

Darkness with its flashing of lanterns, its calls and shouts, its screams of horns, with now and again the dread firing of guns, filled the long hours. Women prayed and waited in the huddle of houses below the ramparts.

Beyond them the river swirled around Saint Annesville on the east and west and north like an invincible army closing in on three sides, bent upon joining hands with the bayou which reached up threateningly on the rear.

All night long Joe and Mr. Felton

had worked side by side in the sand-pit. The kiln had been gutted of its thousands of sacks of stored sand, and the entire force as well as many recruits were at work in the pit. Just before dawn Mr. Felton gave up.

"Joe, I'm through. All in," he said. "You take charge of things here."

That he should have put his most humble "hand" in command neither of them analyzed. The old man had in the course of the trying days and nights discovered that Creole Joe, besides having muscles of steel, could handle men.

What his position was in the kiln, in the town, however shiftless Mr. Felton had regarded the boy in times of peace—in times of war he was a leader. And men acknowledged his leadership, obeyed his orders.

To Joe, there was nothing strange in Mr. Felton's action. Always in his mind he had been a commander of men. His one thought was that he would miss the thrilling action along the levees. He must remain at the kiln. He wasted no time in regret, however, but took over the direction of the work with a zest in which was no bodily exhaustion.

DAWN reached down into the pit. Lanterns were extinguished. Four trucks were started one after the other as fast as loaded toward Fraime's Bend below town where sand boils had begun to show and waves were spilling over the top, threatening to soften the dry outer wall of the levee. A single finger of gold reached into the gray dome overhead.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Every man stood up. Bodies taut. All eyes toward the river.

A skyrocket! Above town! In the direction of Bar Landing! With the bulk of men and sand concentrated on Fraime's Bend below town!

Bar Landing had been judged safe. That is, as safe as safe can be in the Delta regions when the river is on the rampage.

Felton's Brick Kiln was the nearest help. And four trucks of sand had just gone south. A single truck loaded to its utmost capacity stood ready above the pit.

Joe did not consider that he was the commander of a gang of workmen, that his place was at the pit. Help was needed at Bar Landing. He was the nearest help, his own truck waiting.

Out of the pit, as if he were a wire spring needing release, he jumped onto the truck!

He yelled orders in French as he started his motor. English always deserted him in moments of emotional stress. But most of them knew French.

"Bring what you have," he cried. "Don't wait to load fully. You, Bob, fetch on your truck."

More rockets!

"Johnson, you and Marvin come." Without thought of rivalry, Joe had called Marvin, who happened to stand near the truck.

"Well, I'm damned!" cried Johnson as they came in sight of the landing. "I've seen the old river cut lots of didoes in my time, but that's a new one."

INSTEAD of the jagged crevasse common to the river folk, it was as if a giant knife had taken a thin clean slice from the levee. The water came through in a gusher but a few inches in thickness and some ten feet wide, like a steel blade piercing the embankment from base to brow and dissolving in a threatening stream over the land.

"Not bad at all," said Henry Mar-

vin. "This truck of sand will stop it in no time."

Johnson laughed harshly. "Like hell! What you reckon the river will be doin' while we're unloadin'?"

Over the flat, almost treeless vista men and trucks were racing. A matter of minutes, and help would be at hand. But in the space of those minutes several yards of that grass-covered embankment might topple into the river, letting the full force of the water in upon the land.

Centuries of accumulated knowledge of this, the hereditary enemy of the river peoples, poured down the halls of time upon Joe's subconscious mind.

In a flash of revelation requiring neither words nor time he knew, as Johnson did, that there was no time for unloading. His decision was instantaneous. The entire truck load of sand must be rammed into that knife-blade breach. A gambling chance. But no other remained.

If the water-soaked soil were extensive, the truck would simply go headlong into the river, tearing away the rotten soil in one fell swoop. In that case, no damage would be done since but a few minutes remained at best, and nothing could prevent the impending disaster.

If, on the other hand, the damage were not yet extensive, there was a chance that the truck would merely tear out its own width, ramming into solid earth, its wheels settling swiftly into the soft sand beneath, its enormous load, building an immediate barrier which could be swiftly reinforced from the back by the men already rushing to the rescue.

No thought of the stark bravery of his purpose came to him. He was not a gallant Bourdet bent upon self and family glorification. He was a river-man at war with an implacable enemy.

THE SINISTER blade widened as he approached. He maneuvered his machine so as not to head into the water before he was close enough for the heavy car to carry forward of its own weight and momentum, since the motor would be killed the moment the water struck it.

He did not think this all out in laborious, slow-moving words, but in flashes which were converted into action even as they arrived.

Not until they hit the water in high speed did Johnson and Marvin realize the Creole's purpose. They jumped as the big car tore of its own weight into the softening embankment. It sank to its body and was held fast, its radiator nozzling the river, its load coalescing with the embankment into which it was tightly jammed.

Marvin lay on the ground. Johnson rose to catch the first sack of sand pitched off by Joe and was packing the rear end and sides of the truck as help arrived.

The work of reinforcing the levee in both directions went forward with scarcely a word spoken. Each man knew that the danger was but stayed; that the huge plug pushed into the break was at once a savior and a menace.

Joe was throwing sand off the rear of the truck when it sank deeper on its front wheels, seeming to kick up sharply in the back. The unexpected movement caused him to lose his footing. He pitched forward into the river.

The men, seeing him go, were too concerned over the thousands behind the levee to waste energy in a hopeless attempt to rescue one man from the raging torrent.

JOE came up several hundred yards below the break. He had known the

river too long to be afraid of it, but also he had known it too long to be deceived by it. He knew that the strongest swimmer could not breast that current. He did not try. He kept his head above water, watching to see if the levee held.

Not until he was swept around the Bend and out of sight of Fraime's Landing did he consider his own situation. And he knew that nothing short of a miracle could save him.

His first sensation was fury. He had been cheated. Death had no terrors for him. But death by the river was unthinkable. No grand funeral. No honors. No heroic accomplishment. For Joe's idea of heroism included smoke and gore, booming guns and sound of drums.

Without thinking of it, he knew that he had just saved, not merely his people, but perhaps hundreds of towns in the lower parishes. Also that only a great fool or a great hero would have dared what he had done.

But since he could recall no sensation of daring or glorified bravery he was, he told himself, a fool who had saved his people by taking the one chance that appeared to him. Surely that was not heroism.

Here his mind paused. No one would know this. They would all imagine he had deliberately offered his life to save them. Yet he hadn't even thought of his life. His whole mind had been given to making a stopper of that truck which would hold till help arrived. It was very sad. Since he had to die, he wished he had had brave thoughts. It would have been a great consolation.

AT THIS point in his reflections he saw a big tree bearing down toward him, roots first, its heavy top trailing behind. It was some distance up the river and slightly out of the main current. He had not wasted his strength in trying to swim and he felt confident he could catch the tree. Yet even as this thought came he realized he must let it pass.

To die in a battle against men, or to die in a battle against the river—a more implacable enemy—was it not all one, if in dying one saved many? This he had done. He could not now defeat his life purpose by living. Ignominy! Forgetfulness! Had he not seen it even with men maimed for life?

The tree was drawing swiftly nearer. Even if he caught it, he might not be rescued. But the chances were that he would.

The great tangle of roots was almost upon him. Stubbornly he held himself. In a moment it would pass. His one chance of life—and ignominy would be gone. Though still out of reach, the river now swept him along at an even pace with the big trunk as if to hold temptation before him. A cross current caught the top, swerving it toward him. The branches brushed him.

"No! No!" he shouted. "What you wait for?"

As if in obedience the great green top began to swing back toward mid-stream. Just as it would have escaped him, Joe's arm shot out.

For a while he was too shocked by his cowardly action for thought. In that while, aware only of a devastating self-contempt, a blighting self-hatred, he crawled to safety among the branches.

Even then he could not believe he would actually try to attract attention. Presently he would get himself in hand and slip back into the water. It was impossible that, having died before the eyes of his world to save it, he would slink back to be forgotten.

JAQUES LECOURE stood at the

foot of a high mound, like a miniature mountain welded without joint into the levee which flung off from it to the north and south.

At the highest point of the grass-covered mound, overlooking the river and all the surrounding valley, a tall marble shaft lifted, proclaiming to the world that Joseph Andrea Bourdet had died on this spot that the people of Saint Annesville might live. It further stated that Joseph Andrea was the great-great-grandson of Major General Louis Andrea Bourdet, a hero of the battle of New Orleans.

A woman, having laid a wreath against the monument, was descending the marble stair that led to the ground below. Nearing fifty, she was tiny and shriveled, but richly dressed.

"Thass one fine man, *nes-ce-pas?*"

She looked up in surprise as the shabby old Creole addressed her.

"A very fine man," she replied.

She came on down the stairs, then paused beside him, and together they stood looking up at the majestic shaft.

"You do 'omage to heem wid wreath?" the man asked after a space.

"Yes. Every year on this day. It is the anniversary of his death."

"You know heem well, yes?"

"I loved him," she said in a low voice. "But he never knew."

"I am a stranger to these parts," the man addressed her abruptly in French. "I have not heard the story. Perhaps you will tell me." Then returning to English: "But I have forget. You speak French, yes?"

She seemed not to hear his question: "It is so long ago. He was a mere boy, and yet a man——"

She sketched his brief schooldays; his pride and ambition confided to the girl of his heart in the bayou road. She dwelt upon these encounters as if glad to find a strange ear to whom she could speak of the meagre romance of her youth. Then she spoke of his sacrifice.

"He lived but to die nobly," she finished. "Nothing else mattered to him." Adding as if to herself, "Not until he was gone did Mary Lou realize she loved him."

HER voice ceased.

"You are Mary Lou?" the old man asked softly. "And you never married?"

"Yes, I married Henry Marvin. One cannot grieve always. Joe is merely a sweet memory. Good-day, *monsieur*. Forgive the prattlings of a woman old enough to know better."

"Good-day, *madame*. I thank you. It was a fine tale for my ears to hear."

He watched her as she made her way to the road where a man in livery waited beside a big car.

"Well," he mused, "it has been more beautiful to love a dead hero than an ignominous husband come absurdly to life."

He climbed the marble steps and stood looking out over the land. There to the south lay the squat little town drowsing behind the levee in changeless quiescence. The china-ball trees grown a little heavier. The stunted oaks unchanged. At wide intervals a new house.

A vast nostalgia beleagered Jaques Lecoure for the old familiar ways of Creole Joe. The narrow, cobbled streets. The clean shabbiness. The smells of marshland. The silent bayou brooding in the sun. The chortling of the river. There before him it all lay.

Behind him, thirty years. Thirty years within the smother of the long-leafed pine country. Red soil. Hills and hollows. Dark forest walls. A pelican with clipped wings. . . .

THE SUN sank beyond the river. The whole empyrean quivered in a moving panorama of flame and amber glowings. Against its vast canvas sprawled the pigmy mountain-range of the levee holding at bay the brazen torrent charging toward the gulf.

And on the high green peak of the range, dwarfing the bent figure of the man, the majestic column towered like a ghostly sentinel standing eternal guard between the low land and the river.

Jaques Lecoure laid a caressing hand on the cold marble. Read again the record, and with a sigh descended the steep incline on the river side to his pirogue. For a moment he sat still gazing upward, a light of content in his mournful dark eyes.

What were thirty years? Thirty little cards of varying value and color. Returned to the infinite pack.

"It is well," he mused. "A sweet memory for her. A reminder and an inspiration to the future sons of *la belle Louisianne*."

Have You Ever Seen a Ghost?

MYSTERY STORIES

wants to know of the most mysterious happening in your life.

Beginning with the November issue we shall print a number of real experiences in the realm of mystery, not necessarily of the occult type.

If you have had such an experience for which you are willing to vouch, write it up in not more than five hundred words and send it to us.

We shall select the best of the stories submitted and for each that we publish we shall send the author five dollars.

Your stories should preferably be typewritten on one side of the sheet of paper.

"Sure was awe-inspiring through the fog."

Fireworks

By ALEXANDER WILLIAMS

***OLD TIMER** hated the passing of the old order of things. And well he might, when he remembered the marvelous exhibition of fireworks his friend George had staged in a San Francisco fog—in conjunction with the fog created by two quarts of rare old Bourbon.*

FEW people regret the passing of the old order as much as the Old Timer does. And when he has the end of his backbone comfortably notched into the hollow of his old chair, when a hand-made cigarette is burning freely and there are none to criticize, he sometimes holds forth on that epic theme.

"I guess maybe folks don't get the same sort of relish out of things they used to," he opined on one occasion. "Seems like the papers are full of gin parties, gals goin' coo-coo and shootin' up their husbands, lawful an' otherwise, boy-bandits an' payroll robberies.

"I seen a friend of mine the other day who is a cop. He was right tearful, he was so glad about a robbery that was pulled off on his beat. Seems like a fella broke into a buildin', bored a couple of holes in a safe, poured in a little nitro-glycerin' and blew it all to pieces. Then when the outside door was off, this hard-working man took a thing they called a can-opener and cut through the thin steel inner door.

"It was a regular old-fashioned cracksman's job an' the police sure

was glad to hear about it. I shouldn't wonder if they don't pass around the hat up at Headquarters to hire a smart lawyer to keep that burglar out of jail.

"Same way with liquor. Nowadays a fella buys a case of Scotch from a bootlegger an' every time he opens up a quart he either kills it or it kills him.

"In my time fellas used to drink. They used to drink plenty. But they drunk standin' up to a bar with other fellas an' it didn't seem to hurt 'em much.

"I don't know as I ever heard of anybody drinkin' a whole quart of whisky at one sittin' all by himself, 'less'n it was George Simpson. An' he only done it once, under what you might call extenuatin' circumstances."

Old Timer reflectively licked a cigarette, twirled the end into a neat spill and set it on fire. He took a deep breath and, the end pasted to his lip and wabbling as he talked, he began his tale.

"LORD, I ain't seen George for nigh on to ten years, when one day I run into him on Market Street in San Francisco. Son, that town sure was a-boomin'.

"They was gettin' ready for the Exposition, so you know how long ago that was. Everybody in town was busy and those guys that was runnin' the show just slept in their frock coats and high hats like firemen ready for a three-alarm.

"George, he was all a-piece with the town. He sure was swell. Checked suit—and when George bought checks there was no mistake about 'em—brown derby tilted over one eye, red necktie with a big diamond in it, patent leather shoes and —I'm a Siwash if he didn't have on white spats!

"'Boy, howdy!' I says to George. 'If you ain't a sight to make King Solomon wear blinkers, I'll go and turn handsprings all the way down the middle of the lobby of the Palace Hotel.'

"George, he allowed as how he was feelin' pretty spry and chipper, and as how the world was a-usin' him just right. That was pretty enthusiastic for old George, 'cause if ever a white man had tough luck, George did.

"Well, I asked him where he was gettin' his three a day, an' he told me as how he was star salesman now for one of these here fireworks companies. Yes, sir, made a fine livin', George did, sellin' fireworks to the carnivals and amusement parks.

"We meandered along an' put on the nose-bag together, me an' George. An' George, he got real confidential. Seems as how he had a big deal on in 'Frisco. Here was the Exposition gettin' into shape and they was goin' to use lots and lots of fireworks. And George, he was there to land the contract.

"He told me right confidential that he thought everythin' was a-sittin' pretty. Said he had a date with a lot of the Exposition officials an' that he was goin' to give 'em an exhibition in a few days.

"Well, presently it was time for me to be moseyin' along about my business, and George, he had work to do, so we said 'so-long.' You know how it is with friends. You meet one after a long time an' you sorta renew acquaintance. Then, not that you don't want to see 'em, but somehow, somethin' always interferes. Anyways, I didn't see George for a time. Must have been three or four months."

Old Timer paused to remove his feet from their most frequent resting-place on the mantel-shelf and bent his lean tallness over the fire,

busying himself with the poker. When the back-log had been adjusted to his satisfaction and was burning nicely he came back to the matter at hand.

"I NEVER did see such a change in a man in all my born days. His beard hadn't been shaved for weeks, seemed like. Them swell checked clothes of his was all in wrinkles like he'd slept out in the rain a week or so hand-runnin'. His spats was gone. His patent leather shoes was all cracked and run-down at the heels.

"George was a bum from the looks of him. He was shufflin' right by without liftin' his eyes when I grabbed him.

"'My sakes, George,' I says to him. 'Don't you know your friends any more?'

"He stood there sort o' shiftin' from one foot to the other and lookin' right down-hearted. So I took him into a nearby 'workin'man's friend' where he could range free an' easy through the free-lunch.

"He sort o' took the high-spots off his appetite with pretzels an' cheese and wienerwurst an' pickles an' what-not, an' then we settled down in the back-room, while the sordid details kinda leaked out.

"It seems like George, after I last saw him, got things all shaped up. He got hold of the chairman of the committee what was responsible for buyin' the fireworks at the Exposition an' arranged for a demonstration.

"He wired to his people that same day and they forwarded a whole carload of fireworks, rockets an' roman candles an' pinwheels an' set-pieces. They done themselves proud an' George was sure he just couldn't lose that contract.

"'Old Timer,' he says to me. 'everything was fixed. I had my fireworks down on the sidin', the committee was all set to look 'em over an' I could hardly wait for the appointed time to come.

"'We was havin' fine weather just about then, an' the mornin' of the day of the demonstration was just as pretty as any man could ask for. Me, I was walkin' on feathers, an' I wouldn't have changed places with no man on earth.

"'Things went along just grand until late in the afternoon. Then one of them heavy San Francisco fogs the Chamber of Commerce always denies came up.

"'The exhibition was to take place down on the banks of the lagoon in the Exposition grounds, an' I went down while it was still daylight to get everythin' ready. I had some frames rigged up an' I had my fireworks all piled up an' covered with a tarpaulin. I was to show them at eight o'clock, so along about half-past six I meandered up to get a bite of dinner and may be whet my whistle a little.

"'They was lots of time an' I was chattin' with the barkeep an' he was tellin' me all about a new lot of Bourbon they just got in. Real good Kentucky Bourbon he said it was, an' a sample was up to specification.

"'I can always use a little real good Bourbon, so I bought a couple of quarts an' went back to the Exposition grounds with the package under my arm.

"'That fog was just about the thickest an' meanest an' nastiest I ever was in. It was right chilly, an' I stood around first on one foot an' then on the other, waitin' for the officials to come.

"'I got cold an' I blew on my hands an' turned up my coat-collar, but that chill just went right to the bone. I suppose I'd just about froze if I hadn't remembered them two bottles of whisky.

"'I sat down on the edge of the

platform with the fireworks, unwrapped the bundle an' uncorked one of the bottles. That liquor certainly did put heart in me, an' for a time I felt better.

"'The evenin' was wearin' on. It was a little mite after eight o'clock an' them Exposition fellows hadn't put in their appearance. It got darker an' colder, an' I got lonesomer an' chillier——'"

Old Timer sighed as though there were details of the picture that held a certain allure for him, veiled as they were by the obscurity of the years. He crossed one leg over the other and contemplated his worn and scuffed house-slippers with unseeing eye.

"'THEY ain't nothin' so depressin' as bein' alone in the fog waitin' for somebody,' says George. 'Seemed to me like I'd been there hours an' hours. But when I looked at my watch, it only said nine o'clock. I shook it an' thumped it, but it seemed to be goin' all right. So to relieve the tedium, like you might say——'

"George seemed to lose the thread of his story about here," said Old Timer, "'cause his next remark was:

"'That sure was smooth Bourbon, an' it had plenty of authority.

"'I got up an' stamped around some,' George resumed, 'an' then I thought it might be a good idea to shoot off one of the pieces of fireworks just to see if everything was all jake. I fished around under the tarpaulin, found a pinwheel an' nailed it to the post I had all ready. Then I took another little snifter from the bottle an' touched her off.

"'Man, if you ain't never seen fireworks in the fog, you done missed somethin'. That was most the prettiest sight I ever seen. The fog rolled down all around like a great gray blanket and right in the midst of it, all blurry like, was this spittin' pinwheel of fire. No mistake, my company sure had done the right thing by me. Them was first-chop firecrackers.

"'It seemed to be gettin' a little warmer there, too. Might be I was gettin' used to the fog, or maybe the Bourbon had somethin' to do with it, but I wasn't so lonesome an' I sung me a little song.

"'Along about nine-thirty I felt my spirits was a gettin' a little low again. I noticed the bottle seemed to get lower as my spirits riz up.

"'I rooted around an' got me a roman candle. 'Takes practice to make one of them things go right, so I practiced against the men from the the Exposition comin' along soon.

"'I stood there with nothin' but fog all around, wavin' that thing in the air an' watchin' the balls shoot out. They would curve up into the gray an' then they would bu'st, just as pretty as you please. It sure was awe-inspirin', just the sight of them beautiful things in the fog.

"'So it went along. After the first bottle of whisky was finished I sort of lost track of time an' how many fireworks I shot off, but I suppose it was pretty late by the time I come nearly to the end. The company had sent me two big set-pieces like I told you, an' of course I kept them for the last.

"'I sat for a long time givin' them committee fellows a last chance to show up, but by an' by they didn't seem to be no more use an' I kind of figured they wouldn't come that night.

"'I made sure they was one good drink left. Then I got to work an' set up one of the last two pieces.

"'It was hard, but I got it done; then I set her off an' backed away to get the effect. It was wonderful. The piece was a miniature of the burnin' of Rome, an' if old Nero had started fiddlin' right in the midst of

it I wouldn't have been surprised, it was so natural.

"'Them houses burned an' fell in, an' first thing you know there I was dancin' around wavin' the bottle over my head. If anybody had a-seen me they would sure of thought I was looney. But I couldn't help it, it was all so beautiful. I want to say right here, Old Timer, that if you ain't never seen fireworks in a fog you ain't never seen nothin'.

"'MEBBE I set there a half an hour after that piece was done, just ruminatin'. Pretty soon, though, I felt the cold again. So I got up an' started to fix the last piece.

"'It was a humdinger. I worked an' worked, an' when it was all finished I set down some more. I didn't want to spoil any of the pleasure.

"'Finally I felt all rested. I buttoned up my coat an' went over an' set off that piece.

"'Old Timer, I'll never forget to my dyin' day what a wonderful sight that was. I done told you how them things looked in the fog—but this was just twice as beautiful as any of them that went before.

"'It was Niagara Falls, right there just like life. The fire poured out an' down just like them tons of water. It certainly was scrumptious.

"'Finally it was all through an' there was a little pause. I thought myself everything was all over, an' was just gettin' up when the most surprisin' thing happened.

"'They was a loud pop out of the framework the thing was built on, and, before you could say Jack Robinson, up jumped the American flag. There she was—red, white an' blue. I guess maybe I shouted myself hoarse, my throat felt kind of funny the next day. She hung there for a long, long time, an' then she was gone an' there was nothin' but the fog, damp and cold.'"

OLD TIMER put his feet carefully one by one on the floor. Apparently he thought that was the end of the story.

"Well," he said in answer to the question, "George, he told me there didn't seem much to do after that. He drank the last drink in the bottle an' then he sang the 'Star-Spangled Banner,' filed through the gates an' went home."

He carried her slender, unconscious body aboard his launch.

The Blood Pearls

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

The long arm of retribution reaches out from the distant shores of the Philippines to take revenge in the busy, noisy streets of Manhattan. And through the long distance twines the soft, rosy glow of THE BLOOD PEARLS for which a man had sold honor—and all else that matters in life.

CHAPTER I

TSAO-CHUNG'S PROMISE

OF COURSE, to add to his panic, there was not a car to be had anywhere. The only thing left was to call a *calesa*, one of those little two-wheeled, one-horse native affairs, and hope against hope that he would make it on time. Manila was hot, true enough, but it wasn't the moist heat alone that had drenched his white drill suit with perspiration.

Again he slid that quick, furtive look backward over his shoulder as his big frame bent the springs of the *calesa*. For Baslyn was a big man, one of those large men whose bulky weight quivers on them like jelly, whose beards show blue-black through carefully massaged red cheeks and whose forms are blurred with indefinite soft curves.

He invariably called gray-haired men "Old Boy" and saluted callow youths as "Old Man" in a deep and hearty voice that lacked very little of being convincing. His flabby hand was forever resting on someone's shoulders in heavy comradeship or slapping someone's back in bluff joviality. One knew, by look-

ing at him, that he snored stertorously and was inclined to hiccoughs and dullness after meals.

A huge caribou, its hide a glistening hairy gray, its long sweep of vicious-looking horns bent low with the effort of pulling a clumsy two-wheeled cart loaded with slabs of dark brown sugar, stopped directly across the mouth of the narrow old Spanish street and blocked the way.

Baslyn's heavy jowls shook with anger as he leaned out and cursed the sleeping native driver, cursed him with deadly intentness through which ran an almost hysterical note. The possibility of missing the steamer and having to wait over for another two weeks in this dangerous place was too much for his overstrung nerves. Again he twisted his head suddenly to stare behind him.

Of course a Chinaman was only a Chinaman. But there was some quality about Tsao-Chung that set him above most Chinamen—a lean asceticism, a high-bred face that sharply marked him as no ordinary coolie. And his eyes were profound—the eyes of a mystic, a dreamer who had found peace in age-old philosophy and acquired a kindly tolerance for the jangle of the white man's fretful energy.

BASLYN'S heavy figure shook and his breath came in great gasps as he finally swarmed up the gang-plank at the last minute, and leaned panting against the rail.

He almost sobbed with relief as he saw the gang-plank run in and the black water slowly widen between the Manila dock and the ship. A fresh offshore breeze came up and he drank in the grateful coolness and his feverish body relaxed.

Damn the Chink, anyway—all that was behind him. What possible harm could a Chinaman, and a dead Chinaman at that, do him, once he was out of the Orient?

Of course, and he frowned uneasily at the memory. Tsao-Chung had not threatened, he had promised. He had promised a little sadly, but without bitterness and without fear.

That's what made it so disquieting, gave it a touch of realism, of actuality, as the evil of a squat, obscenely carven idol might be made tangible by the sudden venomous hiss of a snake hidden in its hollow depths.

It made Baslyn frown in heavy anger to remember that the serene Chinaman had shown absolutely no trace of apprehension—and here was Baslyn's great bulk wet with the sweat of stark-naked terror, a terror that rode between his fleshy shoulders like some furry, soft-bodied, spider-like thing with a cruel beak and long, hairy claws that could inject at will spurts of poisonous terror through his quivering nerves and flesh.

HE MADE his way to the smoking-room, but avoided the cheerful groups lining the tables, and sought for the most secluded corner, a thing absolutely unheard of before in Baslyn's habits. It was all too recent; he had no mind to speak to anyone. He even found it distasteful to summon the bar-boy for the inevitable whisky soda.

Whisky and Tan-San! He had had plenty of whisky and Tan-San under his belt when it started.

Whisky and soda and the lure of the violet velvet dusk of tropical Manila at Carnival time, the streets filled with gay crowds in strange costumes and mysteriously alluring eyes flashing from black masks. Really a man was not responsible, he reflected, and noisily drained the

glass dry, setting it down with a shaking hand.

The Luneta had been filled with *calesas*, little two-wheeled carriages, each carrying its laughing burden of alluring-eyed senoritas. The Constabulary band had been sobbing forth some haunting melody and he had been out to enjoy life. He had a right to some enjoyment—he worked hard enough.

There was no one that he knew on board the ship. Thank heavens for that! Talking to anyone just now would have been a ghastly business. There were too many images forming and dissolving in his mind's eye.

The senile desire in the eyes of old Dato Penang, the hot fierceness of his nephew, the haunting horror in the last look that the *mestizo* girl had given him as she was carried away—all these kept seething before him.

It was impossible to forget. He was not a man who liked to dwell on unpleasant things; give him a good bar full of roistering good fellows and a hearty course of eating and drinking, with an occasional woman thrown in, and he didn't ask for much more. But he'd certainly gotten himself mixed up in unpleasant things this time.

He shuddered and ordered another whisky Tan-San. Well, you couldn't make an omelet without breaking some eggs, and that was a fact. Only he had an uneasy suspicion that all the eggs were not yet broken. And that was what worried him.

Nobody could have accused him of having a conscience. He had been living on his wits in the Orient too long for that luxury.

No, it wasn't remorse that made him slump into his chair, that kept him away from the easy joviality of his fellows; it was fear—plain, stark, unadulterated fear, a physical fear that had become more than physical, a shameful brooding horror of the future that corroded him body and soul.

And all because of the few words of a heathen Chink! Admittedly he was a triple-distilled fool to let a Chinaman get under his skin like that. But about a Chinaman you never could tell.

CHAPTER II

THE NUMBER SEVEN

DATO found himself staring curiously at a calendar on the opposite wall. The day of the month—he had forgotten the date. He studied the calendar again and found his lips suddenly dry and his heart beating. It was the seventh of the month, there was no doubt of it, and he cursed to himself, venomously and silently.

God! How he hated the number seven! Every bit of hard luck he'd ever had in his life revolved around that number.

He had all the superstition of the hardened gambler. So strongly did he feel about the number seven that he would lay down the finest sort of a poker hand if it so much as contained a single card of that number.

Only once had he weakened, a pat hand, four sevens, and the pot full of lavender peso notes of large denomination. The pot had been boosted and he lost some three thousand pesos against a hand that held only four eights. No, he did not like sevens.

There is too much time for thought aboard ship. Even the steady, resistless throb of the engines, which told him that mile after mile was being put astern, brought no surcease from gloom.

The Philippines were nothing but a low-lying smudge on the horizon when he came on deck again.

There was something in the sombre gaze of the heavy-jowled white man leaning against the rail that inhibited any attempt at familiarity, and he was let alone to his brooding.

AT ANY rate, he had the pearls. He felt surreptitiously of their cool, smooth perfection through the leather bag that hung inside his belt.

They meant thousands of good dollars, thick rolls of friendly yellow twenties and reserved greenish one-hundreds that a man could peel nonchalantly off that soft, heavy bundle and with which he could buy women and good drinks and many good, soul-satisfying dinners.

They meant an end to the necessity of furtive planning and breathlessly fearful action; chaffering with Moro Datos under the roaring downpour of tropical rains; long waits tied up to unobtrusive shores by steaming rice paddies; the loneliness of the gloom of sunless lagoons shielded from the light of day by tropical growths writhing overhead like twisting serpents.

They meant freedom and the joys of civilization. They were pearls of great price.

"Pearls of great price!" He had heard that expression somewhere—he frowned—yes, they had cost a woman's body and a man's life—if that were price enough.

He licked his suddenly dry lips and hoped desperately that that *would* be price enough.

CHAPTER III

DATO PENANG MAKES AN OFFER

OLD DATO PENANG had known his white man well when he showed those pearls.

Dato Penang, a lean wizzened wisp of a Moro in a gaily colored *sarong*, his old face seamed and wrinkled with the passage of the years, his skin a yellow ochre, his mouth a scarlet unpleasantness from the stain of the betel nuts, had squatted there on the dirty matting, one hand on the ivory-and-gold handle of his glittering *kriis*, the other fondling the string of pearls.

Baslyn had gasped as he looked at their superb perfection—a string of pearls fit for a king's ransom, the sheen of each pearl tinged with a faint glow of pink, like a lucent globule of solified mist bathed in sunset, the whole string flowing through Dato Penang's hands like a lustrous river of frozen moonlight flushed with opalescent fire.

Baslyn's hands had trembled as he examined them. God! They were valuable! Never had he seen such uniform matching, such symmetrical arrangement of individually perfect pearls.

Curiously he had examined the clasp. It was a clasp such as he had never seen before, a small oval of soft gold inlaid in steel with small rubies set in the form of a snake. There were seven small rubies, with the largest, the seventh ruby, forming the head. The workmanship was probably that of Chinese craftsmen.

Baslyn's fingers had yearned for the pearls, but the light had faded from his face when the old Dato, peering at him obliquely from smoke-reddened eyes, had stated his terms of barter.

There had been much argument, polite and suave, but the yellowed old man had been inflexible — he would not sell at any sum in money —he would double the number of his pearls for his own price.

And it was that price that had started the whole swiftly tragic course of events—events which had ripped across the evenly woven fabric of Baslyn's life as a sharp

razor might divide a coat from collar to hem.

WITH much sly Malay imagery, much flowery symbolism, Dato Penang had brought out the fact that his harem was going to seed, that he was tired of his women, that his old frame needed reviving with the warmth of youth and beauty. For youth and beauty he would give his pearls.

This was simple enough—what complicated the affair and made it well nigh hopeless was that Dato Penang was particular in the matter—desired only one type of youth and beauty and that the one type most difficult to procure.

The yellowed old man had set his mind on the golden-skinned luxuriance of a Spanish-Chinese mestizo—the rarest and the most beautiful of mestizos, and the most proud.

In the cleanly comfort of this sheltered nook in the luxurious barroom of the liner, Baslyn frowned in heavy perplexity.

It all seemed so unreal somehow—like the weird clashing of nightmare forces.

He could see the parchment-yellow old Moro squatting on his heels under the glow of a crimson-splotched Jolo lantern—a lantern which threw weird, small beams of red light onto the pearls so that they looked as though bathed in blood. It gave him a queer jolt to see them gleaming so evilly in that sanguinary glow.

Underneath the house he could hear the lapping of the waters of the lagoon against the piling. Somewhere in the rear he could hear the subdued chatter of women and the occasional padding footsteps of barefooted slaves as he sat frowningly considering the affair and its chances of success.

When Dato Penang had lifted up the rope of beauty from the floor and extinguished its glow in the capacious mouth of a leather sack, Baslyn had looked upon it regretfully as something impossible of possession; he had never expected to see that string of pearls again—the price was too high.

There had followed the long trip back to Manila to dispose of what few spoils he had collected. He had sat alone in his teakwood cabin dreaming regretfully of that glorious string of flawless pearls as the sea-going launch plowed through the translucent blue waters, guided by the bronze figure of Felipe in a scarlet loin cloth.

Then he had lost himself in Manila, a good dinner and a plentitude of whisky and soda under his belt—a long drive in dreamy, well-fed contentment through the Luneta and out by the sea wall, while the Constabulary band filled the air with dreamy music.

Then back as the twinkling lights flashed on, he had followed the masked crowds into the garish lights of the Carnival grounds with orchestras playing on all sides, gaily costumed people dancing and the inviting strains of "Seraphina" tantalizing his feet.

CHAPTER IV

BASLYN PLAYS THE HERO

THE YOUNG ship's officer sitting with a partner at a small table was undoubtedly drunk. The partner was undoubtedly beautiful — a delightful, willowy grace of figure was indication enough of that, if the carved perfection of her lips and the smoothly modeled chin showing below the mask were not enough.

The combination of the drinks Baslyn had put down, the lure of the beautiful unknown and the fact that the diminutive ship's officer

was shorter by a head and slighter by a hundred pounds, impelled him to sudden interference.

With the ship's officer in retreat and the gentle eyes of the girl shining in admiration of his prowess, he expanded into hearty courtliness, a little elephantine but effective, as the girl's rapt pose testified.

They danced together and then went for a drive in a hired automobile, ending up in the obscurity of the sea wall. Here he tried to kiss her, but she resisted fiercely.

She spoke very little but somewhat breathlessly, in a musical sort of singing voice very pleasing to the ear. And he was surprised to find her English very good although she spoke with a trace of accent.

Her golden skin showed mestizo blood, but as she refused to unmask he could not tell what her antecedents might have been.

The repulse made him angry—an anger he kept concealed.

She was a slender-limbed creature, graceful as a deer, with full-orbed breasts and delicate hands and feet. There was something about her eyes, a fawnlike quality—a softness and a tenderness that puzzled and irritated Baslyn, hardened to harsher fare.

An upper caste girl, he reasoned, taking advantage of Carnival freedom to have a little innocent fun and palpitating with the boldness of it and her own daring.

He guessed her age to be about eighteen or nineteen.

She was somebody's for the plucking, he reasoned. And evidently she had quite a little crush on him, to judge by the way her eyes shone admiringly through her mask.

Yes, she was getting pretty fond of Baslyn, probably the first white man she had ever seen at close quarters.

HE finally made her unmask. The beauty thus disclosed made him gape. Her oval face was serenely perfect, her full red lips perfectly chiseled and her eyes large and soft and faintly slanted, giving them an alluring Oriental air faintly reminiscent of a high caste Chinese girl. Her teeth were as evenly matched as a string of pearls. Her skin was warm and golden.

String of pearls? Chinese? Why, she was a Chinese mestizo! The very girl that old Dato Penang wanted!

CHAPTER V

THE LURE OF PEARLS

A SUDDEN picture leaped into Baslyn's mind—the picture of Dato Penang and his string of pearls glowing in the light of the crimson-splotched Chinese lantern as though bathed in blood!

The picture stabbed him with a strange pain so that he stuttered in his speech—while the girl smiled at him trustfully and her eyes shone with soft admiration.

Damn those pearls! Why had the picture of them leaped into his mind to torture him? Those pearls must be worth a cool hundred thousand—they meant many women, much travel and delight, the obeisance of servants, the comfort that he had craved all his life, the cessation from toil.

He was gripped in a turmoil of wildly clamoring desires—and still the soft eyes of the girl beamed at him. What did one girl more or less matter? He thought yearningly of New York and Broadway at theatre time with the roar of thousands of taxis, of his old cronies around Murray Hill.

It was no trick at all to drug her. He carried her slender, uncon-

scious body down the steps and aboard his launch.

Hailing Felipe, he gave his orders, and in a few moments the launch slipped from the dock and out toward Jolo. She slept deeply on his bunk as they hurried through the night.

THEY slipped into the dark waters under Dato Penang's landing late at night. The flare of torches lit up the surface of the black lagoon. A gong boomed above them.

A muscular young Moro in a crimson *sarong*, with a silver-handled *kriss* at his waist, came down the rickety bamboo steps. It was Dato Penang's nephew, who stated that the old man was away, but would return in the morning.

Baslyn watched the lean, muscular, bronzed figure of the man as he stared at the sleeping girl. The Moro licked his dry lips and his eyes gleamed evilly as he studied the curve of her soft figure half seen in the gloom and took in the beauty of her face, the lips half parted, and the delicate line of chin and throat and breast.

Like some bronze statue, he stood there fingering the silver handle of his *kris*, his eyes hot with desire. Finally he left. Baslyn, looking up at the bamboo platform above him, saw the man's outline in the gloom, and for all he knew the Moro stood there all night.

THE GIRL stirred and wakened at dawn and sat up bewildered as Dato Penang, followed by his nephew, came into the cabin. She stared at them in bewilderment, a slowly mounting fear showing in her eyes.

Then she gazed around, trying to puzzle out this queer dream, and saw Baslyn. Something like a look of relief came over her face.

Dato Penang reached to his belt and slipped out the lustrous string of pearls with their faint pinkish sheen. Slowly he extended them toward Baslyn, looking not at him, but at the girl. It was that that spelled his undoing.

For there was a sudden sharp, vicious *swish*, and Dato Penang slumped forward on the floor in a queer, awkward heap of twitching bone and yellow skin.

Baslyn stood dumbly watching the young Moro wiping the blood from his *kris*.

The nephew jerked the body of the old man to one side. There, coiled underneath like a serpent in a pool of blood, was the string of pearls.

"They are yours," he said to Baslyn.

The shriveled body of the old Dato was thrown into the lagoon. The last view Baslyn had of the girl was when, carried on the Moro's shoulder, half fainting, she looked back piteously. Baslyn averted his head.

SHRINKING in disgust, but eager to see his pearls, Baslyn fished them from out the bloody pool and carried them all wet to the water cooler and washed away the clotted stickiness.

It might have been his imagination, but he could not rid himself of the belief that the pearls were even a deeper pink than before. They seemed to gleam at him evilly.

Moved by some strange horror of them, he shoved them into a bag at his belt and told Felipe to clean up the mess.

AS THE launch sped toward Manila again he drank rather steadily and rather heavily. The girl's face haunted him. The last look that she had given him as she was carried out of sight seemed burned in his mind.

It was a look such as a trusting

child might give a person who had hurt it cruelly. It was seared in his memory, that haunting stare from her great, dark eyes—such a piteous gaze as a deer might give to the huntsman before he cuts its throat.

He stared sullenly at the swirling waters in the launch's wake. Going into the cabin for another drink, he looked at his bunk. The outline of her slim form was still evident on the blankets. Cursing himself for a sentimental fool, he poured out a doubly stiff drink.

It was not before sunset that evening that he succeeded in conquering his distaste for looking at the pearls. Then he pulled them out of the pouch.

Whether it was the crimson rays of the setting sun or his own disordered imagination that worked the trick, it seemed to him that the pearls gleamed evilly red in his hands. He let them flow through his fingers, their smooth coolness more silky than the touch of a woman's skin.

Examining the clasp with its soft gold inlaid in the steel, he noticed the rubies. They seemed to be winking at him obscenely, a red and depraved sort of wink, as though they were in league with him in holding some unholy secret. There was certainly no joy in the possession of these pearls.

They weighed on him heavily with a lowering presentiment of evil, a heavy foreboding of fearsome things. Then he noticed that there were seven rubies—seven!

It had been his intention to take them to the States, where he knew he could get a high price. But after discovering this he decided to get rid of them immediately here in Manila. Old Fong, the Chinese pearl dealer in Intramuras, would give him a good price, anyway—enough to assure him comfort and security for the rest of his days.

It must have been the drink in him that made him careless, for he returned to the same dock when he arrived at Manila again. Later he was to curse himself for this thoughtless move.

CHAPTER VI

"SOLLY, NO WANT!"

OLD FONG, the venerable pearl merchant, was behind his counter, sitting beside the tiny brass scales that weighed most of the fine pearls from this part of the world sooner or later.

"How much will you give me for these, Fong?" and Baslyn slipped them out and let them pour themselves on the counter. The wrinkled Chinaman started to pick them up, then withdrew his hand.

Setting his queer, octagonal-shaped glasses more firmly on his nose, Fong leaned forward, examining them closely with near-sighted eyes, still not touching them, which Baslyn thought strange. Without a flicker of emotion in his face the old man straighted up.

"Solly," he said gravely, "no want."

THE PEARLS lay there on the counter, coiled with all the lustrous sleekness of a snake, the rubies glinting evilly. Baslyn opened his mouth in amazement. He sought for words.

"Why, you blankety-blank heathen Chink, that's the finest bunch o' pearls that ever come out of the Philippines. What's the matter with you?"

"Velly fine pearl; solly, no want."

Fong folded his hands within his sleeves and bowed his head, in that ancient patient attitude of the stub-

born Chinese, an attitude that Baslyn well knew.

He snatched the pearls away and returned them to his sack. "You are certainly crazy with the heat, Fong—what's the matter with these pearls that you don't want them?"

"Velly fine pearl; solly, no want." There was something final and remote and uninterested in Fong's voice.

Baslyn flung out, cursing Fong and all things Chinese, root and branch.

Had he turned as he went out the door he would have seen the venerable Chinaman gazing after him strangely, with something like pity in the ancient, near-sighted eyes.

There was another Chinese pearl dealer in the city and he located him an hour later. This man waved him out while the pearls were still half out of the bag, waved him away with something like fear in his eyes, refused to look at them, refused to explain, simply shook his head and disappeared in the back of the shop until the big, hot-eyed white man had slammed the door, cursing.

THIS exhausted Manila as a market for the pearls. There were several white dealers there. There were also several very excellent reasons why he wanted nothing to do with the white dealers. It looked like the States or nothing.

In a way it was an ill wind that blew no good, for he knew he would get a much higher price in the States.

What had hit these Chinks he didn't know. They treated this string of pearls as though it were the plague. Taking them out, he examined them again. They were certainly wonderful pearls; he couldn't be fooled on pearls at his time of life. What was the matter with those infernal Chinks, anyway?

The pearls lay there in his hand, the red rubies of the clasp winking up at him obscenely. There was no answer there.

CHAPTER VII

BASLYN HAS A VISITOR

IT was growing dark when he finally arrived back at the dock and clambered down to his launch. Scarcely had he landed on deck than he noticed a tall, lean figure detach itself from the obscurity of the broad stairway and approach the launch.

Some foreboding of evil impelled Baslyn to signal Felipe to start the engines. The stranger came nearer. The quiver of the launch told that all was ready to cast off.

Baslyn leaned down and unhooked the heavy mooring rope from its fastening. The man was now almost within touch. Baslyn saw that it was a Chinaman. A spasm of fear swept through the white man's great bulk.

He signaled Felipe. The launch began to move. But it was not quick enough, for the spare stranger leaped the widening stretch of water and landed like a cat on the deck.

Baslyn motioned to the impassive Felipe, a long, sweeping motion, pointing out to the darkness of the bay. The launch gathered speed and hurried into the night, cutting a swirl of white in the oily, black waters.

HIS BULKY figure screening the light from the cabin door, he awaited the visitor. He could not repress a start as he found the strange man suddenly at his elbow.

For the first time he stared into the profound eyes of Tsao-Chung, eyes that gazed at him gravely from

a lean, ascetic face that had about it an indefinable air of high breeding.

"What do you want?" he growled at the silent Chinaman.

"I have come for my daughter."

There was something ineffably solemn about the voice, something of sweetness in the deep tone. It might almost be the echo of a bronze bell deep hidden in the recesses of a temple.

"I'm not keeping a home for runaway Chink girls—I know nothing about your infernal daughter——" Baslyn's voice had sounded hot and excited in his own ears.

"I have come for my daughter. I am Tsao-Chung."

There was something of eternal patience in the tired tone, something of destiny in the sonorous repetition of the words, some note of finality that cast a chill over Baslyn as he listened.

"She came aboard your boat—where is she now?" and the tall Chinaman bowed his head and waited, hands folded in the fullness of his sleeves. The sound of his words still seemed to echo in the air like the subtle overtones of a silver gong.

Baslyn fought down the increasing apprehension that this quiet figure inspired. He lashed himself into a fury.

"I told you once, curse you, that I don't know anything about your daughter, you infernal Chink! You keep on bothering me and for two cents I'll push you to the sharks!"

His eye flickered to the face of the dark waters where he had seen the oily smoothness cut by the sharpness of a black and glistening fin.

"It is an easy matter to push me to the sharks—that would alter nothing; you have committed a wrong. Unfortunately, payment will be exacted. Your punishment is certain, you can not escape it; it will follow you to the ends of the earth, over land and over sea. It will seek you out and find you."

The Chinaman raised sombre eyes to Baslyn's face, eyes in which there was no trace of fear, only a faint trace of sorrow. And the timbre of the resonant voice echoed and re-echoed in the white man's ears.

BASLYN'S heavy figure stiffened. Something within him seemed to explode and the world turned red before his eyes. He heard his voice screaming, "Threaten me, will you, you heathen Chink!" and he had lunged the whole weight of his body at the unresisting figure.

The Chinaman crumpled to the deck. The horror of it was that Baslyn could still see his eyes, their expression unchanged—no fear, but a great sadness in their depths.

It was this that drove him to sudden madness so that he brutally kicked and struck the prone figure until he had rolled it to the edge, where a final drive of his foot sent it overboard.

Half dazed, Baslyn saw the bobbing shadow slide toward the stern of the speeding launch, saw a sudden, quick dart of a black fin, heard a splash and a gurgle. Then there was no sound except the purring of the engines and the ripple of the black water sliding by.

CHAPTER VIII

FLIGHT

HIS heavy body slumped as he sat sullenly in the bar-room of the steamer, which forged its way through the sea day after day with a ceaseless push of the great engines. He came up

on deck for a few moments as they stopped at Tsing-Tau, but the sight of so many Chinamen drove him again to the bar-room.

With these lengthening miles of sea being put between him and Manila, he was inclined to make light of the threat the Chinaman had made.

What had Tsao-Chung meant—"The ends of the earth . . . over land and sea?"

Chinese bluff! The fellow was dead and that was that.

"Boy, a whisky and soda!" he shouted.

The Chink was dead, dead as a doornail; no one knew of his death. Baslyn had sold the launch and taken a steamer the next day. He could claim self-defense if anything leaked out. No! He wasn't afraid of the authorities—it was the grave notes in the man's voice, the deadly finality, the absolute surety with which he promised retribution, his tones almost sad as he spoke, but certain.

Lord! How deadly certain he had been! The thought of it returned to plague Baslyn like some insistent nightmare.

Queer people—Chinks. You never could tell what tricks they might have up their sleeves; he'd feel better when he set foot in the good old U. S. A.

He would find amusement enough—find enough even to drive out that constantly recurring picture of the look in the eyes of the girl as the young Moro carried her up the bamboo steps to the dark nipa-thatched house on its high piles.

IT WAS good to sight the shores of North America again. They had swung around the Northern route and landed at Victoria.

There was something about the great pine-clad slopes, something clean and reassuring. He thought of Tsao-Chung again as he set foot on the dock . . . and smiled a little. The Chinese were pretty far away from this place, with a whole ocean between them, the great sweep of the vast Pacific Ocean itself.

There was some delay in the customs as he arrived at Seattle. He left the long line waiting for its baggage and decided to clear his head with a walk along the waterfront.

Something about the water fascinated him; he could not keep from wondering at the fact that this same water washed against the docks at Manila and against the rotting piling of Dato Penang's wharf in far Jolo.

He found a sandy stretch of beach and sat on a broken box to watch the ceaseless march and retreat of the waves.

There was something lacking in the beach and the water's edge, he couldn't quite tell what it was; something that was a familiar part of this scene. Ah, he looked up; now he knew what it was.

Circling and skimming far out and now headed inshore he saw a group of sea-gulls, their gray wings carrying them flapping and sailing along. As they came nearer he idly counted them. One, two, three, four . . . five, six, seven. Suddenly they bunched up and flew directly toward him, landing on the beach a few yards away, where they strutted around gravely.

Seven of them! He didn't like that. It made him feel vaguely uncomfortable, somehow. He decided to move. That number always gave him the creeps. It reminded him unpleasantly now of the string of pearls and the sardonic winking glitter of the seven blood-red rubies on the clasp.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN FROM THE SEA

A GROUP of boys were playing in the sand. One of their number came running excitedly out from under the nearest dock, pointing back at the water's edge.

Baslyn idly followed his pointing finger and saw a figure stepping out of the water close to the wooden piles underneath the dock. The great logs of pine set upright in the mud obscured the vision and made him a little imaginative.

He almost smiled at his own fear; human beings did not swim from Manila to the shores of North America. But all the same he watched curiously until the figure reappeared again, coming through the heavy forest of timbers close beside him.

It was a bedraggled figure, lean and spare, something horribly familiar about it, and a cold chill ran down his back as he gazed at the man's lowered head.

Suddenly the head was raised.

THE boys in the sand stared curiously at the vision of a great lumbering white man running and screaming while the great sombre eyes of a Chinaman with a lean, ascetic body and a high-bred, gentle face gazed after him inscrutably.

It was the taxi driver who first made him realize how wildly insane he must look. The man stared at him in astonishment. "Want to go to the hospital, buddy?" he asked.

How he got to the station he didn't know—nor did he know what train he climbed aboard. He found with relief that it was going eastward and hired a stateroom and locked himself in until he got to Chicago.

The wheels kept clicking out: "To the ends of the earth, to the ends of the earth." They varied this monotonous refrain occasionally by "Over land, over sea, over land, over sea," until he fled through the great high-arched draughty station in Chicago to get away from that grinding refrain.

He spent three days in Chicago, moving constantly, by taxi and street-car and on foot, until his trail was crossed and tangled past all unraveling. He leaned exhausted against the bar of a little speakeasy on a side street—the barkeeper glancing curiously at the big man who drank whisky straight down, glass after glass, without any effect as far as the barkeeper could see.

IT WAS the barkeeper who told his boss about it that night.

"And that bozo was standing there lappin' up them drinks as quiet as you please, me wipin' off the bar and sayin' nothin'.

"All of a sudden this big boob lets out a squawk like a dyin' duck and breaks for the side door. I yells after him, 'Hey, how about payin' for that last drink?' But he's gone. I comes back from the side door, and there ain't nothin' I can see that excited him like that. I guess he was startin' the D. T.'s and thought he saw a pink hippopotamus or two. I've seen 'em look like that.

"When I comes back a lean-lookin' Chink is standin' by the bar. I tells him to get out. I ain't waitin' on no Chinks — no, sir, not this baby! And out he goes, quiet as a mouse, and that's that.

"But that white-faced bozo was sure queer. I'm tellin' you he looked like the devil was after him; yes, sir, that baby was travelin' some when last seen, and I don't mean maybe!"

THE TRAIN that Baslyn threw himself aboard was made up of day coaches. Shaking as with the palsy, he went through it from end to end, narrowly looking at every passenger before finally dropping into a seat up next the baggage coach. The conductor asked for his fare and Baslyn pulled out a fifty-dollar bill.

"How far?" asked the brass-buttoned official.

Baslyn had trouble getting his voice under control. Finally he wheezed out, "To the end of the line," and his voice was like a supplicating whine, so that the conductor looked at him narrowly before passing on.

It was at some little town way up in Michigan that he left the train late at night. The three or four houses within view were dark; behind them stretched the woods.

That night he slept in a barn—Baslyn, with a fortune of over a hundred thousand dollars coiled in a smooth string of superb Oriental pearls at his belt.

The high-piled timothy hay in that upper story of the barn was refreshing to his tired body. It never occurred to him that anyone else might find it refreshing. He slept heavily.

IT WAS in that darkness that precedes the dawn that he awoke with a feeling of panic, of terror, and sat bolt upright. There was no sound to disturb the silence of the peace except the occasional movement of the cattle underneath. Deciding that he had a bad case of nerves, he decided to try to sleep again. He felt of his waist where he kept the bag containing the string of pearls. Sweat broke out on him.

The pearls were gone.

Tired finally of his frenzied search through the hay that surrounded him, he sat, his knees drawn up beneath his chin, waiting for the slowly increasing daylight to aid him.

Wearily and dejectedly he finally climbed down from the hay loft, carefully avoiding the open holes in the floor where the hay was fed down to the animals beneath.

It was beneath one of these holes that he found the dead hobo—a lean, rat-faced man with several days' growth of dirty beard.

The fellow had slipped down through the trap-door full on the sharp prongs of a pitchfork. One prong had pierced his throat so that he lay in a huddled heap, his hands spread out somewhat in the attitude of a swimmer. Near his right hand was the bag with the pearls intact.

In the dim light of the barn they looked like some live thing, the sheen of them almost triumphant, the glitter of the tiny rubies on the clasp more evil than ever.

Baslyn was begining to hate that string of pearls.

But this lonely barn was a good place to leave behind.

CHAPTER X

THE HAND AT THE DOOR

HE could not remember where or how he wandered for the next few days. All he knew was that he must keep moving. The sombre dignity of the great woods gave him some sort of peace. That Chink would never find his way in this sort of a place.

It must have been the third or fourth day that he found the deserted logger's cabin. It was a little one-room, one-window, one-door effect with a sheet-iron stove standing high in a box filled with earth.

On the shelves were some tin cans, in one of which he found

some rice. In another package he found some mouldy dried apricots. With the aid of a discarded tomato can he boiled up the rice and the apricots and made himself a meal from the sweetish-sour mess.

In this place he cowered for three days, fearful of every creak of branch or snap of twig in the forest outside. At night he lay listening intently, but could hear little above the soughing of the winds in the pines overhead, a sound that reminded him of the sea.

He never wanted to see the ocean again. Never could he look at salt water without thinking of those seven sea-gulls heralding the apparition of that long dead Chinaman rising from the water.

Tonight the wind was high, he could hear the restless, deep hum of the pine trees, sounding like breakers on a distant shore.

He lay on the rude bunk, the window overhead flooding the cabin with moonlight. In front of him was the door, which he had secured by a small length of rusty chain, a length of chain that permitted the door to open a few inches.

WHY his mind concentrated on that door he didn't know. Somehow he was not surprised when he saw it move. He had the feeling of being detached, of watching that door from a position above and outside of his body, which lay there trembling on the bunk.

The crack of the door widened slowly and inexorably. As he watched he saw a hand, a long-fingered, slim hand with long finger-nails, silently steal around the edge of the door and fumble with the chain that held it. In the clear moonlight flooding from the window overhead he recognized that hand.

He sat bolt upright, his eyes starting from his head. Even in his horror he managed to feel of the pearls at his belt.

The hand fumbled and worked at the chain.

Baslyn raised himself silently, pulled his great bulk noiselessly through the window, dropped on the soft leaf mould outside, and fled.

DAYBREAK found him clambering down the sidehill above a railway track. His heart was laboring, he was drenched with sweat and trembling like an over-driven horse. He had been running since midnight, running until he fell exhausted, only to rise again when his breath came back, to start his lumbering, hurrying gait until he dropped again.

The brakeman on the freight train let him ride for five dollars. But the brakeman was certain that he was carrying a maniac.

"That scared-lookin' guy we picked up back there," he told his companion, "is sittin' pickin' things out o' the air. Believe me, that guy's got 'em bad. The squirrels are sure on his trail."

But the scared-lookin' guy dropped off at Detroit and tried to lose himself in the city. A dull, animal-like instinct of self-preservation was keeping him going—a hopeless desire to avoid whatever fate was in store for him. Terror had long since left him. He felt doomed beyond all hope of redemption.

Of course he was driven forth from Detroit. Peering fearfully from the dirty window of a small restaurant, he saw the lean figure of the Chinese walking slowly and thoughtfully on the opposite side of the street. Baslyn escaped through the kitchen and down an alleyway.

NEW YORK seemed safer somehow, it was so big. It was with a gasp of relief that he lost himself among

the hurrying crowds in the Grand Central.

In New York he repeated the Chicago maneuvers, twisting and twining about, taking subways and elevated, uptown and downtown, taking taxis and street-cars acrosstown, glancing fearfully back over his shoulder the while. Late that night he ended up at some dreary little hotel in the East Thirties.

Here he skulked in fear for days, until his beard had grown and he felt that the change in his appearance would keep him from detection. Watching from behind the curtain of his window, he sought among the hurrying crowds for some glimpse of Tsao-Chung's lean face. As days passed and he saw nothing he ventured out again.

Scarcely had he set foot on the street when a lean shadow detached itself from the darkness of a doorway on the opposite side of the street and he fled again like a hunted cat.

This time he tried to lose himself in the crowded noisomeness of the East Side. Eventually he was driven out of this to some new hiding-place like a harried and hunted animal.

CHAPTER XI

THE SEVENTH TIME

ONE day he cowered in the back room of a saloon off Lexington Avenue. It suddenly occurred to him that he had seen the Chinaman exactly six times. A chill went through him.

He felt instinctively that the seventh time would be momentous. Maybe if he got rid of the pearls it would shake this infernal Chink or ghost of a Chink that was following him!

A breath of hope stole into him. Yes, that was the thing. He must get rid of the pearls. He would have to sooner or later. His funds were running out; he was down to his last five-dollar bill.

There was a dingy little shop off Nassau Street that he knew from report. Every pearl dealer in the Orient knew of this little shop, through the unassuming interior of which passed at one time or another most of the really fine pearls of the world. Best to get down there and get them transformed into money, get rid of them and have instead a soul-satisfying roll of bills—a thick, comforting roll of good, dependable dollars.

The only disadvantage attached to this pearl dealer's shop was the fact that it was too near Chinatown. One had to approach entirely too close to Pell Street for comfort. But he circled warily around the dangerous district, arriving at the dingy little building which housed the pearl dealer by a roundabout and circuitous route.

THE BARE little outer office of the pearl dealer was deserted. He knocked on a closed wicket, an iron-barred cashier's window. A small window was opened and a voice bade him wait for a few minutes. The small window was closed again. Restlessly he walked to the window looking upon the street, his back to the door.

The light was such that the window acted as a sort of mirror in the depths of which he could see his own pale face and disordered hair, could see the great shadows under his eyes and the lines that fear had etched into his face. He had aged ten years in these past few weeks.

In the window he could also see the room behind him. He could

hear no sound in the room, but he saw the door open. He knew who was opening that door.

There was no surprise in his mind when he saw the lean, ascetic face and the grave, sad eyes of Tsao-Chung reflected in the window-pane.

There was a great weariness of soul that made him sag, careless and indifferent, so that he did not turn around but watched incuriously the slow, silent approach of the Chinaman carrying something in his hand that glittered evily.

Baslyn was frozen where he stood. He had lost the power of movement. He felt as in a nightmare, helpless and indifferent.

The small wicket in the cashier's window opened after a few minutes. A voice called, but there was no response. Curious and slightly perturbed, the bald, bespectacled little pearl dealer came out to investigate.

He was very much shocked to find sprawled underneath the window the body of a heavy-set, paunchy stranger, his throat cut from ear to ear. What made it more bizarre was the fact that the man had, draped about his neck, a string of beautifully matched Oriental pearls.

The dealer, professionally observant in spite of his horror, could see that they were valuable in spite of the fact that they were well bathed in blood.

AN imperturbed Chinaman, his lean, ascetic face creased in thoughtful lines, walked into the joss house near Pell Street.

"I come to bid you farewell," he said to the hatchet-faced high priest. "I return to my own country."

The high priest peered at him through dim eyes.

"Your task is then accomplished? You have wiped out the stain on your clan and avenged the death of your honorable brother, Tsao-Chung?"

The lean Chinaman bowed his head in assent.

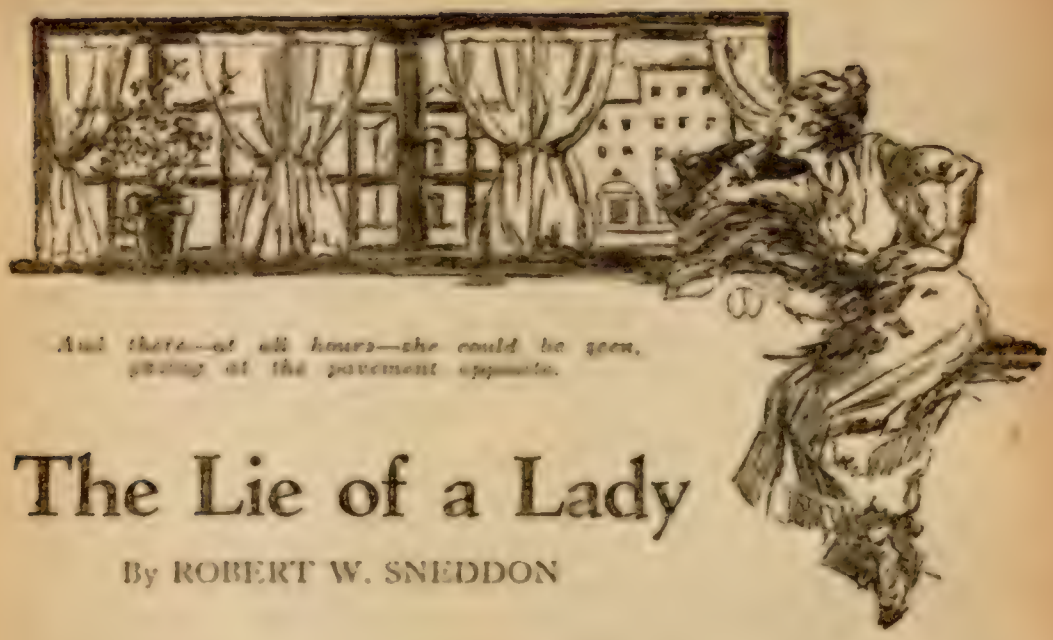
The old high priest cackled.

"Unlucky the man who wrongs the son of a man who has seven sons. But you and your honorable brothers will recompense yourselves with the pearls?"

"It was the evil in the pearls that destroyed the white man," the lean-faced Chinaman returned gravely: "Our unworthy selves were only poor instruments. They are accursed as any one but a white man could see, for are not the Seven Cardinal Sins clearly shown in the snake of rubies on the clasp?"

"They are accursed, you say? And the curse?" the old priest persisted.

"It is written that a man cannot rid himself of them unless the pearls are bathed in the blood of his untimely death." The lean-faced Chinaman shrugged his shoulders. "And now we go to our own country again, but this time to return in dignity befitting, not to be thrown out into the water like friendless, smuggled coolies, while still a hundred feet from shore."



And there—at all hours—she could be seen, gazing at the pavement opposite.

The Lie of a Lady

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

Back in the days of the Big Parade an orphaned sailor-boy and a lonely spinster found each other by chance. And when the war was over the woman claimed her boy—through THE LIE OF A LADY.

THIS is my tribute to Eva Baxter, once resident of Greenwich Village. A wreath of flowers upon her grave, flowers which wither and pass, I might have laid in tribute. If I have chosen something less beautiful, but something in which others might share, then surely she who now knows divine forgiveness will forgive and, understanding all, be glad.

Greenwich Village, the Bohemia of New York. I smile quietly, knowing how far removed from Bohemia in their ways are those residents of the Ninth Ward who cling to and maintain its ancient tradition. They are very proud of their part of the city and its associations, proud of their memories enshrining the old landmarks that are falling so fast before the speculative builder and his lieutenant, the interior decorator.

Some of these elderly people are among the friends I hold most dear. One of them was little Miss Eva Baxter, whose story is worth telling, pieced together as it necessarily is from what I saw and heard from her own shy confidences, and from what I gathered from time to time in talk with her landlady, and from a chance word here and there in the various stores with which she dealt.

Miss Baxter could have given the stranger no direction as to finding

any of the ever-changing haunts of the gay, but she could have gone blindfold herself to the places she knew so well—to the Greenwich Avenue School where she had received her education, to the Church of St. John where as a child she had pulled the lamb up the aisle on Easter Sunday, to the Metropolitan Temple where she listened eagerly to lectures, to the Jackson Square Library and to Hearn's store where she was so much at home.

She had a tiny room, the front hall room of a house in Eleventh Street. And there at all hours while the daylight lasted, when in, she was to be seen at the window, gazing with never-wearied eyes at the stretch of pavement opposite and the traffic of Fourth Street which cut across at the corner in wilful violation of the numerical arrangement of New York's streets.

Nothing could have induced Miss Baxter to move from her surroundings, though the little old house on Perry Street in which she had been born had long since gone, and she could count her old friends on the fingers of one hand. She had a sentimental attachment to the neighborhood which nothing could destroy. Her parents had lived in it, and, too, a very dear friend had grown up in it.

And besides, nowhere else could such sunsets be seen over the hills of New Jersey. How often she and Randolph had watched them together! And nowhere else was the night made so alluring with the siren calls of ships going out to sea, to Europe.

She had been to Italy when she was thirty-five and fluttered timidly through its great cities with another maiden lady—poor Amelia, laid to rest. She had a lock of her hair in a brooch they had bought in a little shop in Florence where a mustachioed count had been so persistent in making their acquaintance that they had to call a cab and drive for an hour before they dared direct the driver to return to the hotel.

ONCE a year at least Miss Baxter read her guidebook to Italy, footnotes and all, and felt her eyes moisten at the sight of the familiar names of hotels and the incidents they evoked. It was in such memories that she lived, and was able to retain her good spirits and the self-respect, so dear to her, in the little hole in the wall she inhabited.

It was a cozy refuge to her, and she saw to it that it was neat, with the white coverlet on the couch-bed, white curtains at the window, a white lace cover on the dressing-table, though most of its surface was hidden by her silver toilet articles, little calendars and booklets and, in the center of the photographs, his.

You may be sure there was never a speck of dust on the glass over the pictured face of a man in uniform, a face both stern as befits a soldier, but smiling as a lover, with wide-apart eyes and a look that said: "I may be dead, my lass, but not our love."

He had been a captain in the army. They had known each other from childhood, and their engagement had no specific date. When he got his promotion to major they were to be married.

He had died suddenly of fever at his army post. Her fingers had grown thin, but his engagement ring still encircled one of them. I believe she wore black for him, though she softened it with a gray scarf or with lace collars and cuffs which she made herself.

She was little, with a certain compact sturdiness, and she walked with

a hurrying breathlessness, as though her life depended on getting from one point to another.

Subconsciously she had a horror of violence, of fights, of war—though it was not that which had taken away her lover. But in her mind there was an association of which she could not rid herself.

And to her, as to so many, the outbreak of the war came as a blow. She closed her eyes to the bitter fact and retired within her shell.

IT was the old Scots carpenter living in the next room who established her contact. All she knew of him was that he nodded to her in passing, and that he smoked continuously in his room. There were times when she timorously opened her door an inch that she might catch a whiff of his tobacco and be transported back to the days when Randolph, her captain, asked if he might smoke his cigar in her mother's parlor.

One morning, however, when by rights he should have been at work, she ran into him as he came down carrying his toolcase and wearing his overcoat. He stood aside to let her pass, but some impulse moved her to speak.

"Aren't you working today, Mr. Macdonald?"

"No," he said soberly. "This is my last day here, me'm."

"Are you leaving the house?"

"Yes, I'm sailing the day for Liverpool. They'll be needing skilled carpenters, an' I'm no too auld to do my bit. I've two nephews that have joined up and I'm thinking my sister will be feeling the pinch.

"You see, me'm, I'm a good American, and I take off my hat to the flag that flies above us all, but I canna get awa' from my Scots' build, and maybe I'm all the better a citizen for my pride in the auld country. But this is a long palaver. I'll be on my way. Good-by, me'm."

Miss Baxter felt her eyes grow unaccountably moist.

"Good-by, Mr. Macdonald," she said and put out her hand.

He took it gently.

"Thank you, me'm. Maybe you'd like me to drop you a line from the ither side, a bit of post card?"

"Yes, do! And I wish you a safe voyage and good luck."

"Amen to that, me'm."

He went downstairs. The front door shut softly, but Miss Baxter stood on the stairs, looking down into the dingy hall with its discolored rug and worn linoleum.

What vision of glory she saw no one can tell, but with a sigh she ascended slowly to her room. She closed the door and sat looking at the face of the man she had said good-by to so many years ago.

THE DAY that America entered the War was one of mingled joy and sadness. It was strange. That day she received a letter from Scotland. She had received her promised card from the old Scot and heard nothing more. But this letter was not from him. It was from his sister. Mr. Macdonald had died from overwork. But he had been happy that he had done his duty, his sister said, and his last wish had been that she should write to Miss Baxter and send her a sprig of heather, in remembrance of a crabbed old man.

It was well that she had her paper with its news to help her. She was genuinely grieved. How happy he would have been to read the news which she was reading. America had spoken.

Time and again throughout the passing months she gathered up her courage to offer her services in some war work. But the shrinking habits

of years were not to be so easily overcome. When it came to the point of actual contact with those in charge, she wavered and failed to act upon her impulses.

And yet, in her dreams, she saw herself moving to and fro with business-like air, directing manifold activities, meeting every situation and crisis with serenity. Often she addressed her mirrored image:

"Eva Baxter, you're an old fool! Where's your common sense?"

But the mirrored Eva never reassured her.

She never passed a window with its service flag but she looked up curiously in hopes that she might see what sort of woman had a son at the front. She envied these mothers, envied them more than she pitied for their anxiety, their suspense, for their terror of the tidings of the day.

One day in a store I overheard her with one mother who had just had a letter from her wounded son.

"Believe me," said the mother with trembling voice; "when my boy comes back, there'll be nothing too good for him. My, but I do miss him! I can't wait till the next mail, and his letters are just like himself.

"And he looks forward to getting mine, he says, and I slip a handful of cigarettes flat into the envelope. God save us, there was a time when I wouldn't let him smoke them in the house, but now I'd do anything to make it easier for him.

"Oh, it's a trial, but I'm proud to know he's there. We're all proud of our boys. Aren't you, ma'am?"

Miss Baxter went white.

"I—I don't know. You see," she faltered, "I have nobody."

The mother looked at her sharply, then her eyes softened and she cried impetuously:

"Oh, you poor thing! Well, maybe you're better off. I haven't slept a wink since I got his last letter. He was wounded in the hands. There was a shell burst—shrapnel, they call it—and he put up his hands to save his eyes. He has such wonderful eyes—brown they are. But he wrote himself so it can't be so bad, do you think?"

"No!" murmured Miss Baxter. "I do hope he comes back safely."

She hurried from the store without her purchase. What had she done to be now without a son to give her country?

She had been knitting socks and mufflers. But all her efforts were so impersonal. If only she could have tied the muffler round the neck of some soldier or sailor boy, then she might have felt that she was really doing something, that she was closer to him.

THAT night she sent out a letter in trepidation, comforting herself with the thought that many such as herself were adopting godsons. In due time she received an acknowledgment that her name had been given to Robert Wells of the navy. And sure enough, one morning she got a letter from him in which he told his naïve history. He was a foundling orphan and only too glad to have someone write to him.

By the first mail back to him went a muffler and wristlets, and the correspondence continued. At first Miss Baxter used her primly ladylike correspondence style, but soon a warmth crept into her letters.

She spent less time at her window. She had an interest in life. The fate of another human, breathing being was bound up with her own.

A month later she got startling news. Robert was coming to New York, he hoped, in a couple of days

—and he *sure* would drop round to see her. He would wire her when to expect him.

Miss Baxter was filled with sudden qualms. If Robert came, she would have to receive him in her bedroom. No amount of camouflage—she was quite proud of her familiarity with that word — could transform her little place into a reception-room. And for a lady to admit a strange young man to such intimacy—why, it was almost improper.

She debated the question with herself, and then smiled contentedly as the problem resolved itself. What did it matter? This was no time for finicky airs. She was old enough to be the boy's mother, and he wrote such a fine, manly letter.

Then she began her preparations. She laid in a bottle of grape juice and some sweet crackers.

It took her quite a long time to venture into the cigar store. She walked in at last, positively blushing.

"Yes, madam?" interrogated the clerk with an amused twinkle in his eyes. "What can I do for you?"

"I want something to smoke."

"For yourself, madam?"

"Indeed, no. For a sailor."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. A great many ladies come in here. We have nice pipes. Here's a fine line at four dollars — genuine imported briars, real amber, sterling silver mounts. Perhaps you prefer a box of cigars?"

"Do I have to buy a box?" gasped Miss Baxter, fingering her slender purse. It was near the end of the month.

"Oh, no, one cigar or as many as you like. Tell you what, madam, suppose you take a couple of cigars and a package of cigarettes to go on with."

"Very well. Be sure and pick out good cigars and not too strong. He's only twenty-two."

"Yes, madam," agreed the clerk with profound seriousness.

"Now, here's a nice one. How's this?" he added.

Miss Baxter examined the gaudy band.

"That looks very nice. And you say it's a good one?"

"I smoke the brand myself," answered the clerk. "And a package of these. Anything else I can show you? Pouches, cases, matchboxes? Playing cards? No! Much obliged. Come again."

Miss Baxter peered carefully out of the door. If anyone saw her, what would they think? She escaped, however, and hurried home with her treasures.

THE GREAT day came and, warned by Robert's telegram, Miss Baxter waited impatiently, the cigars and cigarettes laid out on a small table with ashtray and matches handy.

At each faintly heard jangle of the bell in the basement her heart leaped to her mouth. From her lookout at the window she swept the street corner with expectant eyes.

All at once she saw a tall sailor standing scanning the numbers of the houses. He came across. The bell rang noisily and Miss Baxter ran down breathlessly to open the door.

The sailor removed his cap. What a nice, clean, frank-looking boy he was!

"Miss Baxter live here, ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes. I am Miss Baxter. Won't you come upstairs? You are Mr. Wells?"

He showed his white teeth in a pleasant grin and put out his hand. It was large but shapely, and all at once Miss Baxter had the queer-

est feeling. Her Randolph had had just such a hand.

"Yes, I guess so," said her visitor. "Only I got out of the way of 'Mister.' Suppose you call me Robert. It'll come easier to you, maybe."

"I'm afraid you'll think this is such a tiny room," Miss Baxter apologized. She was trembling with excitement as she showed her guest into it.

"Well, you ain't so awful big yourself," he said approvingly. "It suits you, I guess, and that's all there is to it. You sure got it fixed up shipshape. Real homey."

"Won't you sit down — Robert? Let me have your cap."

He settled his long frame gingerly in her rocking-chair.

"Now you must smoke," said Miss Baxter commandingly.

Her guest hesitated as she moved forward the table with its array of smoking materials.

"Well, you see, Miss Baxter," he confessed shyly as he noted the eager invitation in her eyes, "I never got the habit."

"Oh, dear!"

She could not conceal her disappointment.

"Tell you what I'll do," said her sailor. "If you like, I'll take the smokes to my bunkie. He's a regular furnace."

"Will you? I'm sure I wouldn't know what to do with them," she said.

"You've got someone in the service?" he asked as his eyes, taking note of his surroundings, came to the photograph in the silver frame.

"No! He—he died twenty years ago."

"Gee! I bet he would have loved to be in it now."

His accents were so sincere that Miss Baxter could not but agree with a proud and swelling heart.

"He was a fine man, Robert, and a brave one. He would have fought like a lion for the right."

"It's a pity. I sure was glad to get in touch with you. Letters mean an awful lot to us boys that have no known kin, and knowing there's someone thinking of us . . . " And then, as if half ashamed of the sentiment to which they were veering, he asked suddenly: "Got any plans? I was thinking maybe you'd let me take you for a bite somewheres. Any good eating place roundabouts here?"

"Why, I wanted you to be *my* guest," faltered Miss Baxter.

"No, you don't," said the sailor decisively. "Where did you get that idea? Get on your hat."

"Very well," said Miss Baxter and then grew hot all over. What was she to do—put on her hat and cloak in front of him? It was—well—not quite the thing for a lady to do. She rose and wrung her hands nervously.

"I'll go downstairs and wait for you in the hall," Robert announced. "Guess you want to powder your nose."

"Oh, will you? I shan't be a minute."

He went out.

"The foolish boy," said Miss Baxter with a moist smile. "Powder my nose! The idea! I suppose he thinks I paint my face. I really shouldn't go. I don't believe he can afford it, but he'll feel hurt if I don't go. And, anyway, I won't eat much. I'm not a bit hungry."

AS THEY came out of the house she hoped that everyone might see her, especially when he offered his arm to her. She hung upon it, almost in the true sense of the word—he was so tall and walked so rapidly, even for her usual mode of haste.

"They'll be taking you for my girl," he told her gallantly.

"You mean your mother," she said, pressing his arm impulsively.

"Well, I guess if I had a mother like you," he retorted, "I'd call her —my girl."

Strange, fluttering thoughts passed through Miss Baxter's imagination, and she clung closer to the sailor.

In the restaurant to which he led her he would not listen to her timid protests, and a planked steak was set in front of them. It had been a long time since she had tasted a steak. It was not exactly the sort of thing which could be cooked on a gas ring.

She enjoyed every morsel of it. And added to her physical enjoyment was the exhilaration of knowing that many admiring eyes were directed toward her escort.

"They take me for his mother," she whispered to herself and nursed the idea tenderly.

"Ice cream and coffee, now. No, leave it to me. This is my party. I've been saving up my appetite for a week."

When he conducted her home to Eleventh Street and left her with a promise to come again, she felt that her cup of happiness was overflowing.

"You'll take care of yourself, Robert, and not get cold," she pleaded maternally.

"Cold! Me? Not with your muffler round my neck. We've had a fine party. Good-by, and don't fall for another boy," he added humorously as he strode off.

THINGS were certainly stirring in Miss Baxter's world. There was to be a block party on Eleventh Street, running from Fifth Avenue to Ninth. She gladly gave her mite to the collector who went from door to door soliciting funds.

The day before the party was one of enchantment. She could not tear herself away from the window. The street had become an arcade of flags.

Workmen were busy erecting poles and stringing them with electric bulbs and streamers. Each window boasted its decorations. In the centre of the block and in the adjoining one also were platforms for the band.

About noon Miss Baxter's landlady knocked at her door.

"A gentleman to see you. He's down in the hall."

"A gentleman?"

Miss Baxter was surprised and puzzled. Who could it be? She hastened to fix her hair and descend. In the hall a genial-faced man stood hat in hand. He turned to her eagerly.

"Miss Baxter?"

"Yes."

"My name is Seaton. I'm in charge of the party tonight, and I've just learned you were born in this neighborhood. Is that right?"

"Yes, I was born in Perry Street."

"Then what I want is this: Won't you do us a favor? Just say a word tonight. You don't have to make a speech. Just a few words about the boys, and the pride in them we all have. We want one of the old residents, you know."

"Oh, I couldn't," cried Miss Baxter, shrinking back. "I never made a speech in my life."

"It will be all right," he assured her earnestly. "We want you badly. We want the party to be a big success. Now, won't you? Just for once. It'll be easy. I'll introduce you. Come, anyway, even if you only say, 'Here's thanking our boys.'

"I don't want to rush you—but you'll come, Miss Baxter? I'll be

around after supper and look after you."

Before Miss Baxter could utter the emphatic refusal on her lips, he was gone.

THE DAY was one of agony. It was so little he had asked, and yet, to stand in front of a crowd and speak! She never could have the courage.

There were women, wonderful women, such as Edith Cavell, who in the shadow of death could face anything sustained by immortal faith, while she, weak, worthless creature, hesitated to do a simple thing like this. The hours passed, growing heavier, more terrifying.

She hoped against hope she would be forgotten. Mr. Seaton must have so much to do, what with the things he wrote every day in the newspaper and his other duties.

The festoons of bulbs glowed with color and light. The candles were lighted in the swaying Chinese lanterns. The pavements rang to the tread of feet and the shouts of the children rose clear. The band had marched into the street, and national anthems were swelling over the housetops.

The door-bell rang like an alarm. Miss Baxter ran to her door. It was too late. The landlady had ushered Mr. Seaton into the hall.

He was coming upstairs. She must see him—she could not be guilty of rudeness. There was a tap at the door and she opened it with sinking heart.

"Here I am, Miss Baxter," Mr. Seaton announced cheerfully. "You see, I am ready for you. Got your hat and coat ready? Now, don't be scared."

"Oh, I can't come," she moaned.

"Yes you can! Show them what a real American woman can do when she makes up her mind."

There was a sound of voices downstairs. Someone ran up with hurried footsteps.

"Oh—beg pardon. I didn't know you had company."

"Robert!" cried Miss Baxter.

"Excuse me," said the persistent Mr. Seaton. "Your nephew, eh?"

"What is it?" asked the sailor, looking from one to the other. "Who is this guy? What does he want? You're all upset."

"I'm in charge of the block party tonight," explained Mr. Seaton, "and Miss Baxter is going to speak for the old residents—just a few words."

"I'm not," Miss Baxter protested. "I can't, can I?" She appealed despairingly to Robert.

"Sure you can," that young man said decisively. "Leave it to me. We'll be right along."

Miss Baxter gasped weakly.

"Ah, I've got it," cried Mr. Seaton, beaming. "Both of you. You'll say a word or two. We'll be glad to have a navy boy, and all we'll ask Miss Baxter to do is stand by you. Is that a bargain?"

"Sure. Come on, Miss Baxter; we'll see you through."

And Miss Baxter, with scarcely time to put on her things, was hurried downstairs and into the street. The procession was passing—Joan of Arc on a white horse; a row of girls in costumes of the allied countries, Columbia at one end, Britannia at the other; then the service flag with its rows of eloquent stars.

THERE was a hush, then a great shout. Hardly knowing how it came about, Miss Baxter found herself up on the platform looking out upon a sea of faces which seemed to sway, rise and fall. She was trembling so that her sailor escort had to slip his arm about her, and she leaned heavily upon him as he stood erect. In a half daze she listened to the speeches.

"The Navy will talk now," proclaimed the active Mr. Seaton. "Three cheers for the navy, everybody! Hurrah-rah-rah!"

The sailor went forward to the edge and stood looking at his audience with a friendly smile. He had apparently forgotten the regulations forbidding men in uniform to go on public platforms.

"Folks," he shouted, "let us start in right! I'm no speaker. I'm a sailor and, you all know the way the Navy talks is with big guns, and there's no come-back when we hit the target.

"Now, folks, we're all met here to do honor to the boys of the neighborhood. I'm not the one to talk about them, but here's a lady who has the right to do it, a lady who has seen most of your boys grow up, a lady I am proud and happy to be with tonight.

"Miss Baxter, one of the real old residents—and I'm just going to ask her to call for three cheers for the boys of Eleventh Street."

He turned abruptly to her and took her arm in his.

"Now!" he commanded bruskly. "Three——"

Miss Baxter opened her mouth. Something greater than the dominance of her timidity swelled within her—the touch of Robert's strong arm, the pulsing emotion of the crowd.

"Three cheers!" she cried, astonished at the strength of her voice: the rest of the sentence was lost in the volume of sound, repeated and again repeated. She felt the roughness of a rope in her hand. Robert pulled, and high above her the service flag with its inscription—"In Honor of Our Boys"—reached the centre of the rope across the street.

"Couldn't have done it better," Mr. Seaton complimented her. "Thank you again and again. Now we'll let the young folks have a chance to dance."

Standing on the steps of the rooming-house, Miss Baxter, now that the ordeal was over, was exalted. The band was playing one tune in endless repetition. "Frenchy" it was called, Robert told her, and the whole street swayed and circled to the circling sound of shuffling feet.

Suddenly Robert looked at his watch.

"Oh, say," he cried dismayed. "I've got to hustle some! I'm due in thirty minutes. I didn't tell you, but we're going out tonight, so I don't know when I'll get a chance to see you again. But I'll write, and don't you forget to drop me a line when you get time. Good-night and good-by."

He paused a moment. Then, putting his arms around her, he kissed her.

"Gee!" he whispered hoarsely, "but you've been good to a fellow—Mother."

The word dropped gently from his lips. Then, as if afraid of saying more, he walked off smartly. At the corner he turned and waved his hand.

For a long time, so it seemed, Miss Baxter stood listening to the band. She felt very tired and the excitement had given her a headache.

Eleven o'clock.

SHE WIPED her feet on the doormat with her usual care and, opening the door, went upstairs. She undressed, laying each garment on the chair as she folded it with mechanical precision. Then she put out the light.

She was just going into bed, shivering in her nightgown as the night air blew in upon her from the open window, when she had an impulse to do something she had not done for years. She knelt down by her

bedside and whispered softly in prayer:

"God bless and keep him."

Suddenly she started. The band was playing a medley of old popular songs. What was that? "The Bowery—The Bowery!"

They were singing that a little before the last time she had seen her Randolph. Oh, would he approve of what she was doing, admitting another to that shrine within her heart which was his alone? She turned her face toward the photograph to which the flickering lights of the street gave an impression of life, and added humbly, as if pleading for his approval:

"Our boy."

I REMEMBER seeing her leaning out of the window, waving her hand to the ambulance which came so rapidly through Eleventh Street bearing the wounded boys from ship to hospital.

"You'll catch your death of cold," I shouted up to her, but she only smiled and waved her hand more vigorously.

A voice cried from one ambulance:

"Oh, you American!"

"Did you hear that?" she called down excitedly to me.

HOW easily we forget, and how far distant and fantastic as the world of dreams is the war. Forgiven and almost forgotten its enmities; its friendships—who shall say how many of them we strive to maintain?

And so it was that when my little family and I moved from the village I did not know whether Miss Baxter was alive or dead. The years rolled on without our meeting.

And then, standing on the sideline one Armistice Day, I was startled into recollection. Marching sturdily ameng the gold-star mothers was Miss Baxter. She looked whiter and frailer, but otherwise I could see no difference.

"You must have been mistaken," said my wife to whom I carried the news.

"No, it was our Miss Baxter all right, though how she got among the mothers beats me."

And then, by that coincidence which is so common, I ran into Miss Baxter in the bank on Eighth Avenue.

She seemed genuinely glad to see me, and I know I was delighted. She was pinched and weary, though, and her eyes looked tired.

"I saw you on Armistice Day, marching," I said.

"Oh, yes," she said, and a faint flush crept into her cheek. "Just think of your seeing me! I didn't think a soul did."

I don't know why, but she seemed to be a little as though on her guard now.

"Robert was killed at sea, you know."

She answered very simply. And though her eyes were upon my face, I felt she did not see me, but was looking beyond to some far horizon.

Suddenly it came to me.

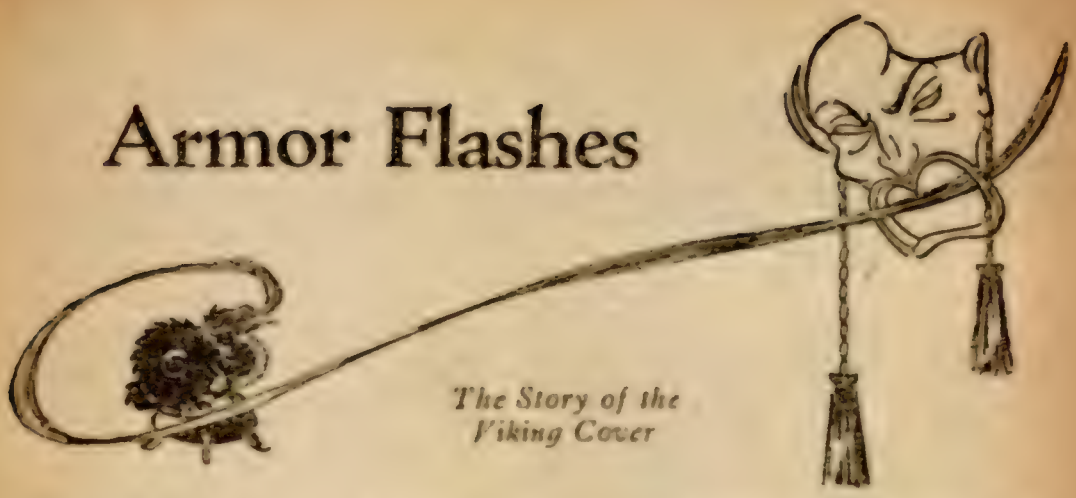
"Oh, your sailor, of course. I'm sorry to hear he died. I didn't know godmothers, though, were reckoned among the real mothers."

Miss Baxter folded lengthwise and smoothed out the few bills she was holding. Then with a strange and lovely dignity she said firmly:

"Robert was my son."

As she uttered this lie which, while it robbed her of her cherished virtue, set her among the mothers of the world, she met my startled eyes with a pathetic and unanswerable challenge. Then, with a little abrupt nod, she left me standing, and that was the last time I ever saw her—in life.

Armor Flashes



The Story of the Viking Cover

A MYSTERY of beauty. A mystery of color flashing over northern skies. There comes a feeling of some higher mystery as the weird, flickering radiance of the Aurora Borealis glorifies the night. A mystery of light—but no mystery to the Vikings.

The Vikings—they were the pirates of old, superb specimens of mankind whose life was spent on the highways of adventure and whose fervent prayers were for death in battle; rovers of the waters who plundered and ravaged the lands, who waylaid the ships of the seas, whose greed was for conquest and spoils.

As they watched in the quiet of the night, the fantastic shapes of their dragon ships silhouetted against the brilliance of the northern lights, there was no mystery to them. They knew the meaning of it all.

They could have told you that up in Asgard, in the land of the gods, was the wonderful palace of Odin, the great hall of Valhalla. Here were gathered the chosen heroes of the Northlands, those who had been killed in battle.

Odin had need of these heroes, for there was coming a day when the gods would meet the giants in a final battle. Until then, what feasting and fighting!

Every day the heroes would battle till everyone was cut to pieces, and then—in a flash—all wounds would be healed, and the fighters would return to Valhalla for the feast.

No wonder the soldiers of old desired death on the battlefield!

The messengers of the gods, the Valkyries, were warlike maidens mounted on horses and armed with helmets, shields and spears. They were sent to every battlefield to choose the heroes from among the slain.

They placed the favored ones before them on their horses and took them to Valhalla.

And the Northern Lights? Why—they were the flashings of the armor of the Valkyries as they rode forth to the battlefields!

No—the Northern Lights were no mystery to the Vikings.

FRED. T. EVERETT.

Now was the time to get it.

The Watch

By NEIL MORAN

When a "go-getter" sets out to get a thing he usually accomplishes his purpose—unless he wants a watch which is an heir-loom and is held because of sentimental reasons. Then he's liable to run into difficulties.

IT was a peculiar case. There was no doubt of this. And yet, understanding something of Bolton's nature, one could appreciate why he wanted the watch when he couldn't get it.

When he first saw the watch it was in the hands of Henry Lane, who was a bookkeeper for Wethersby & Company. Bolton was the general manager and he came out of his office that day and stopped as he saw Lane looking at the timepiece.

It was an odd-looking watch and this was what arrested Bolton's attention. No ordinary watch could have done it. But there was something about this watch that caught Bolton's fancy and he stopped at Lane's desk and inquired: "What's that you've got, Lane? A watch?"

Lane looked up and smiled.

"Yes, sir," he said. "And it's a beauty. You don't often see a watch like that and it's been in my family for generations."

"Let see it," said Bolton, and Lane handed it over.

Bolton examined it, turned it over and then placed it against his ear to listen.

"It's an odd-looking watch," he said slowly. "I've never seen one like it."

"No, I guess they don't make that kind today," said Lane. "Or if they

do, I've never seen them. I just want you to see the works, sir. Here, let me have it."

Lane took it and opened the back and Bolton leaned closer.

"A beautiful watch," he commented. "I don't suppose you want to sell it?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Lane. "As I told you, it's been in my family for generations."

Bolton went away, but thoughts of the watch didn't leave him. They gripped him as if the watch were a living thing. When he was leaving his office that night he again saw Lane looking at it, and though this time he did not stop, thoughts of the watch were with him as he hurried out.

BOLTON was a hard man to get along with and was very much in disfavor. The employees didn't like him. There were reasons for this, of course; so many reasons that Lane had been agreeably surprised when Bolton had stopped at his desk and had spoken in such a gentle manner.

However, as the days went by he began to understand this better. Bolton wanted the watch. Almost every time he saw Lane looking at it, he would stop and ask to examine it. Sometimes he would say to Lane when Lane had occasion to go into his office: "Let me see that watch, Lane, will you?" And he would sit and admire it while Lane would secretly chuckle.

It pleased him very much to think that he had something that Bolton wanted. He remembered that as a boy he had wanted another boy's fire-engine and had kept after him until he got it. But it was hard for him to understand why a man like Bolton should so persistently want something he knew he had no chance of getting.

Then Lane, who was a small, gray-haired man with a diffident manner, decided that the watch had become something of a problem to Bolton, who was known as a go-getter. Lane had heard stories about Bolton's efforts and his boast that he always got what he went after.

Considered in this light, it was easy to understand why the watch to Bolton was no small matter. Desire had started in him, desire to possess something that had caught his fancy, and now desire and determination were welded into a strong combination.

IT WAS around this time that old Wethersby died and left everything to Bolton. This was a shock to some of the employees who had hoped to share in the old man's business. But Bolton got everything and it changed conditions.

He decided to cut down expenses. One after another of the men he let go and he had Lane slated to go with them. But the day he pushed a button with the intention of summoning Lane and discharging him, he thought of that watch.

If he let Lane go, the watch would go with him. If he kept him he might still get it.

So a little later when Lane came into the office to make a report, he had no idea how near he had been to dismissal.

He had missed Bolton's asking to see the watch; for some time past the general manger hadn't mentioned it. But now that thought rose to the surface.

"By the way, Lane," said Bolton, "have you still got that watch?"

Bolton smiled, trying to be very ingratiating.

"Why yes, sir," said Lane, drawing it from his pocket, and Bolton took it as if it were the first time he had seen it.

He turned it over in his hand, ex-

amined it, placed it on the desk and stared at it.

"You'll think I'm foolish," he said, "but that watch fascinates me. Lane, I want it."

Lane smiled and decided to be diplomatic. He knew it was not only the watch that Bolton wanted, but the satisfaction of getting it.

"Well, as I told you, sir," said Lane, "I couldn't part with it. The fact that it's been in the family so long——"

"Oh, rubbish!" said Bolton. "What do you care about that poppycock? Come on, Lane. I'll make you a nice offer."

Lane shook his head, secretly gloating.

"No, sir," he said. "I'm sorry. But, you understand, I could never part with it."

That made Bolton determined. Another element had entered into the case now that he hadn't seen before. Lane was opposing him.

TWO weeks later he called Lane into the office one morning and surprised him by saying: "Lane, how would you like to go yachting?"

"I don't understand you, sir," said Lane, blinking.

"Don't you? Well, I've bought a yacht. I'm going to give a party. You and a few friends are invited, so you'd better get ready."

Lane looked at him and Bolton knew what he was thinking.

"Haven't the clothes, eh?" he said, smiling. "Well, here's a check to go get them."

"I wasn't thinking of that, sir," said Lane. "But—well, the whole thing was so unexpected."

"Well, after the surprise wears off tell me if you'll join us. You know I like you, Lane. I've always liked you. And it would do you good to get a vacation."

Lane looked at him and something seemed to say, "Is it Lane you like, Mr. Bolton, or is it Lane's watch?"

And then, without giving Lane a chance to decide for himself, Bolton did it for him.

"We sail next Monday," he said. "You be ready. Get some snappy clothes, Lane, and prepare to enjoy yourself."

Lane went out of the office bewildered. When he reached his desk he sank into a chair and rubbed his forehead. He was going on a yachting party, he who had been limited to ferry and excursion boats.

"But I can't help thinking," he muttered, "that the watch has something to do with it. Well, I'll go, Mr. Bolton, but you'll never get that heirloom."

ON THE following Monday morning Lane drove down to the dock in a taxi. He got out, brushed his shoulder and looked around airily. There was the yacht, and it was a beauty. Bolton had bought it with some of the money Wethersby had left him.

"And to think," Lane muttered, "that he put all that money into that floating palace. Oh, the old man didn't do right by his employees. And there's charity. Yes, he could have given some to charity."

Poor, old, poky Lane! If he had had money he would have been philanthropic. But he had never been a go-getter.

"No," he thought, "but Bolton is. But he'll never get that watch!"

That pleased Lane, as it always did when he thought of it. And when he stepped up the gang-plank and met Bolton at the top, his face was beaming.

Bolton clouted him on the shoulder.

"Lane," he said, "you look like a new person. Turn around until I get a look at the rear of you."

Lane swung around, feeling very foolish.

"And there are some pretty girls on board," said Bolton. "Just wait until you see them!"

"Girls?" said Lane, for he was dreadfully afraid of women.

"Yes, and here's one now," said Bolton. "All right, captain, let's start moving. Teddy, I want to present Mr. Lane, one of my esteemed employees. Miss Teare, Henry."

Lane gulped and almost lost his balance. Bolton had called him Henry.

"How do you do, Mr. Lane?" said Miss Teare, shaking hands with him. "My, but you're a nice daddy!"

Bolton exploded and ran off chuckling at the remark. But Lane stared at Miss Teare in consternation.

"Oh, come on," she said. "Don't stand on your dignity. W. B. told me about you and said to be nice to you."

"W. B.?" said Lane.

"Yes, Mr. Bolton."

"Oh, yes," said Lane, connecting the initials. "Well, I'm afraid that you'll find that I'm not a great fellow for fun. You see, I'm past that age, Miss Teary."

"Teare," she corrected. "Don't make me teary. There's nothing teary about me. My idea is: laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and your laundry bill runs up."

"Well, I must say," said Lane laughing, "that you're jolly."

"Oh, I'm jolly all right. Aren't you just thrilled at the thought of going to the Mediterranean?"

"Yes, I must say I am," said Lane. "You see, my traveling has been very limited."

"Back and forth to Coney Island in the summer and perhaps over to Pittsburg now and then, I suppose."

"No, I've never been in Pittsburg," said Lane. "Though I have been in Coney Island. My, the air is clear. Do you ever take deep breaths?"

"Sure," said Miss Teare. "Watch!"

She drew herself up and started to inhale.

"What's that, pop, you've got?" she asked, as Lane drew a watch out of his pocket.

He was now "pop," and his cheeks burned.

"Oh, that," he said, pleased to explain the association, "is a watch that's been in my family for years. I prize it dearly."

"I don't think much of that," she said. "It looks like a piece of junk. Now there's a watch for you." She held out her wrist. "Platinum," she said, "and diamonds galore."

Bolton came along and grabbed her hand.

"What are you doing to old Henry?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing. We're getting along like two kids at school. He was just showing me a watch."

"A watch?" said Bolton. "Oh, the watch, Lane! Where is it?"

Lane drew it out of his pocket and Bolton held out his hand.

"Same old watch!" he said, gazing at it longingly. "A wonderful watch."

"Say," said Miss Teare, "you're as bad as Hen. Where do you get that that watch is wonderful?"

"Why, don't you know, dear child," said Bolton, "that that's a very unusual watch?"

"Try and pawn it," said Teddy, "and see how much you get. That's where the value of something shows up—under the sign of the three balls."

"She doesn't understand," said Bolton, turning to Lane. "You can see she's a mere child."

"Yeah, like your grandmother is a flapper!" said Miss Teare and she bounced off.

"Who is she, sir?" asked Lane, looking after her.

"Why, that's Teddy Teare of the chorus," said Bolton. "Great little girl."

He placed his arm around Lane and starting walking down the deck.

"I want you to enjoy yourself, Henry," he said, "and know that I'm your friend."

And Lane couldn't help thinking: "It's the watch. He still wants the watch."

THAT night, when they were well out, bottles were uncorked and the party started to make merry. Lane sat in a corner, a silent spectator, feeling very much alone. Miss Teddy Teare was much in evidence, kicking her heels in the air, and there were other girls present and half a dozen men.

Bolton, spotting Lane in the corner, walked over and touched his arm.

"Come on, Henry," he said. "Join in. Take a drink."

"But I don't drink, sir," said Lane. "That is, only once in a great while."

"These days you ought to be glad when you can get it," said Bolton. "It's good stuff."

"I have no doubt of that," said Lane. "But, you see, I'm not a drinker, sir. I wonder if I could have a little ginger ale."

"Surely," said Bolton. "Teddy, give him a little ginger ale." Bolton winked and Teddy filled up a glass.

"Now, daddy," she said, bouncing over, "you and I will drink from the same glass. Take a sip, honey. You first."

Lane took a mouthful and set the glass down.

"There's more than ginger ale in that," he said, smiling.

"Well, what do you care. The ginger ale won't mind."

"No," he said, getting up. "I have the uncomfortable feeling that if I drank one glass I'd get drunk."

"Well, get drunk, then," Bolton cackled. "We'll all be with you."

"No," said Lane, and he started to walk toward the door.

"Well, he's about as live as an electric bulb that's busted!" said Miss Teare. "Say, Bill, where did you pick him up?"

"I told you. He works for me. Keeps books."

"And what was the idea of bringing him?"

"Oh, I have my reasons," Bolton said. And Teddy Teare, knowing him, thought: "Ahem! Some dirty work!"

Lane stepped out on deck and drew in a deep breath.

"Well, here I am," he said, "and I'm sorry I came. What is there in this for me?" He started walking down the deck, talking to himself. "I have nothing in common with these people and I'll be with them for weeks."

It wasn't a bright outlook and he felt depressed. "Well, anyway," he consoled himself, "Bolton will never get that watch."

SEVERAL days passed and Lane was growing more upset. Teddy Teare with a spirit of deviltry dogged him around the deck, pretended to make a time over him and the onlookers roared. They were making sport of Lane and he flushed.

Yet, with that spirit that is so often found in such mild characters, he kept his head up. He tried to show that crowd—and, indeed, he succeeded—that though they laughed at him, he could still retain his self-respect.

And one of the girls, softer than the others—the lone one usually found in such a crowd—felt sorry

for Lane and told Teddy Teare to desist.

"Aw, pack it up!" said Teddy. "I'm only trying to jolly the old man."

The following night Bolton drank more than his usual amount and staggered on deck. Lane was sitting in a corner, gazing at the stars. He noticed that Bolton was drunk. Bolton came reeling over and clapped Lane on the back.

"Well, if it isn't little Henry!" he said. "How are you, Henry? How is your heart? Say, listen. How about that watch? You know, the watch that the old man handed down to you and the grandfather handed down to the old man and his father handed to him. What a lot of handling there was in your family! I say, Henry, let me see it, will you? Come on."

Bolton nodded his head and whispered confidentially and Lane drew the watch out.

"There it is, sir," he said. "Be careful you don't drop it."

"I'd like to own this watch," said Bolton. "Want to sell it?"

"No. I've told you many times, sir, that it's not for sale."

Tonight the satisfaction of keeping that watch from Bolton had gone from Lane. Or it couldn't be stirred.

"I suppose it's the old story of sentiment," said Bolton. "But what do you care? All those people are dead. They won't know it. Come on, I'll give you a good price."

"No, sir," said Lane, and he put the watch back. "You don't seem to understand the meaning of sentiment, Mr. Bolton." Lane was surprised that he was speaking his mind. "And there's so much good you could do, if you would. Think of all the money that Mr. Wethersby left you. Hasn't it ever occurred to you that there's much good you could do with it in the world?

Bolton got up. He passed a hand across his face and shook.

"Do you mean to say," he said, and he seemed to sober, "that I'm no good?"

"I didn't put it that way, sir, and I'm sorry if I offended you. You see, I guess I must be tired of this yacht."

"Well, if you are I guess everyone else is tired of you," said Bolton. And he started down the deck.

Lane looked after him and bit his lip. A hasty tongue! How often a hasty tongue has said things that are afterward regretted.

"But it's so," said Lane. "The man is no good!"

LANE didn't rejoin the party that night and around nine o'clock he went to his room.

He wished he were back in that little room in Manhattan, but wishes were vain here. So he tried to read, found that he couldn't do it, and went to bed.

He was up bright and early the next morning, feeling a little better. After a good night's sleep the world didn't seem so dreary. He was of a forgiving nature and decided to greet Bolton pleasantly. After all, Bolton had been drunk the night before and hadn't known what he was saying.

That was the way Lane tried to excuse it. But that morning he changed his opinion.

As he stepped on deck Miss Teddy Teare bounced up to him. She was wearing a white suit and a panama hat and she looked trig, but was still offensive.

"Say, Henry," she said, "what did you say to Bolton last night?"

"Oh, did he tell you?" said Lane, frowning.

"Yes, he told me all about it and it didn't make a hit with him. What

do you care how he spends his money."

Lane took off his glasses and polished them.

"I suppose I have no right to say what he should do with his money," he said slowly. "But I can't help feeling that he could do so much good with it."

"Aw, apple-sauce," said Teddy. "You can't be letting those things annoy you. And here's something to chew on." She lowered her voice and looked at Lane sidewise. "I have it on good authority," she went on, "that as soon as we land one member of this party is to be dropped. Now I'm not saying who that person is and I won't say who told me. But there's one wooden Indian in this crowd and it's about time someone removed him." And she pulled Lane's tie out of place and walked down the deck, grinning.

Lane looked after her and he felt decidedly uncomfortable. Someone was to be dropped when they landed. Could it be that Bolton would play a trick like that on him?

Lane thought of being stranded in a foreign country. And for the rest of that morning he walked around hoping to see Bolton. But Bolton was confined to his room with a hangover.

IT WAS that afternoon that Lane saw him. Bolton came walking down the deck with Teddy Teare tugging at his elbow.

"And I told him," she whispered, "that as soon as we landed someone was going to be dropped with his baggage. And I guess he knows who that someone is."

"I wish you hadn't done it," said Bolton severely. "I wanted that to be a surprise to him. But run along and I'll see if I can make him think I was fooling."

Teddy Teare hurried away and Bolton walked over and laid a hand on Lane's shoulder.

"How are you, Henry?" he said affably. "I just heard something that displeases me. That little fool went and told you that I was going to drop you. But no matter what I said, I didn't mean it. It was the result of a hangover."

Lane looked up and began to feel a little easier.

"Then there was no truth, sir," he said, "in the statement?"

"Absolutely none. That is, I did not mean it. I want you to feel, Henry, that we're companions."

Lane unconsciously drew the watch out of his pocket and looked at Bolton kindly.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said. "that there was a misunderstanding. I suppose I had no right to talk the way I did, but then, I was pent up and thought you might care to listen."

"It's all right," said Bolton. "But I wish you would do something for me: Put away that watch. I'm tired of seeing it."

"You're tired of seeing it?" said Lane, astonished. "Why, I thought, sir, you admired it."

"That's just it. I do, but I know I can't have it. So it's become an eyesore."

"Well, if you feel that way about it," said Lane, "I'll return it to my baggage."

Bolton's eyes brightened.

"Yes, return it to your baggage," he said quickly. "That's a good way to get rid of it."

THAT afternoon Lane returned to his room and made a startling discovery. He was so methodical that he knew just how he left things, and he was sure that someone had been tampering with his baggage. One bag was a foot out of place and another was against the wall

where he hadn't left it. But a small black bag was in place and this he unlocked hurriedly. The watch was inside. But those other two bags were unlocked and he was positive that someone had gone through them.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, trying to understand it. Was it possible that Bolton had been in the room? And could it be that Bolton was so bent on getting that watch that he would stoop to steal it? Lane didn't know. But it did look funny.

In view of the circumstances, Bolton was the one most likely to do it. Lane wouldn't put it past him. But whoever had been in that room, it taught Lane a lesson. He locked the two bags, shoved them under the bed, and several minutes later he left, frowning.

Now that assurance had been given him that he was not to be dropped from the party, he tried to be a little more companionable. He deemed it advisable. He mixed with the crowd but still, try as he would, he maintained that aloof bearing. And seeing this Teddy Teare snickered and poked Bolton in the elbow.

"Look at 'Riotous Youth,'" she said. "Ain't he the devil?"

That night Lane came on deck because the hilarity below was too much for him. The crowd wasn't only drunk, but disorderly.

Teddy Teare had taken off her slippers and hurled them through a port-hole and one of the men had started to climb out when someone grabbed him.

They didn't know what they were doing. A drunken crowd bent on going the limit, licentiousness so often mistaken for freedom.

Lane wanted to be alone to do his thinking. But as he started down the deck a young sailor accosted him.

"Good evening, sir," he said, touching his hat deferentially.

"Good evening," said Lane, liking this clean-cut fellow and the respect he paid him.

"It's a clear night," said the sailor. "And the moon's showing. But I don't think——"

Shrieks of laughter came from below and the sailor looked serious.

"You'll excuse me, sir," he said, "for saying it, but you seem to be the only one in this crowd that has any sanity. The rest are just nutty. I don't like to complain, but if I knew it was going to be like this, I'd have taken another berth, sir."

Lane looked at him and nodded approvingly.

"Young man," he said, "you are to be commended. I suppose I am old and old-fashioned. But at the same time I don't object to anyone's having a good time if it's conducted within the bounds of decency. But some of the sights I saw downstairs were positively revolting."

The sailor nodded and touched his hat respectively.

"Well, I got to be getting along, sir," he said. "Who's that? Bolton?"

LANE turned. A man had come on deck waving his hands wildly. He was convulsed with laughter. He threw back his head and shouted and then he turned suddenly.

"My God!" said the sailor. "Is that smoke? Is that smoke, Mr. Lane? There's something coming up from that stairway!"

Lane started walking. "It's smoke," he said. "Yes, the place downstairs must be on fire."

The sailor hurried away and went to report to the captain.

"Smoke coming from downstairs, sir," he said. "Looks like a fire."

"Investigate. Pass the word to the men to get busy."

Other sailors already were rushing down the sairs. Bolton stood, blinking. Drunk and reeling, he staggered along the deck, holding onto the rail and feeling his way carefully.

"What's the matter?" he said stupidly. "Little smoke. Nothing to worry about."

An officer brushed past him and made a report to the captain.

"The fire's out of control, sir," he said. "And it's spreading. We've done everything we can, but can't check it."

"The boats then," ordered the captain. "Where are the passengers?"

"In a room, sir. I guess this has sobered them."

"Get them on deck and start loading."

Up through a stairway came a number of men and women. Teddy Teare was screaming.

"Be quiet," ordered an officer. "Take it easy, and everyone will get out of this."

He shoved her and someone else shoved her and she was pushed into the arms of a sailor who tried to comfort her.

"It's all right, miss," he said. "Now step lively. The first boat is ready."

Lane got in that boat as flames shot up through the doorway.

"Next!" cried an officer. "Next boat. Where is Mr. Bolton?"

BOLTON was crawling around on the other side of the deck. He knew that something was wrong, that a fire had started, but in his drunken state he didn't realize his danger.

He was thinking of something else that possessed him. In this moment of moments the peculiar workings of his sub-conscious mind threw up a thought that gripped him: There was a watch he wanted and the watch was in Lane's baggage!

Now was the time to get it. With a drunken man's cunning, he started down the deck, chuckling. A sailor passed him and grabbed his arm. It was the sailor to whom Lane had addressed his remarks.

"The other way, Mr. Bolton!" he said. You know there's a fire."

"Sure," said Bolton. "Put it out! Put it out! What do you think I pay you for?"

"But it's spreading."

"Then stop it!"

Bolton started on, bent on carrying out his purpose.

"Here, sir," said the sailor, "I can't let you go like this. You're drunk and don't know what you're saying."

"Let me go," said Bolton and he flung the sailor against the rail and started running.

When the sailor looked around Bolton had vanished. The captain appeared, deeming it time to leave the doomed vessel. Conforming with his ethics, he was to be the last one off, and as he saw the sailor he grabbed him roughly.

"Down to the last boat, man!" he ordered. "What are you doing there? Moon gazing?"

"Mr. Bolton, sir!" said the sailor. "We must save Mr. Bolton!"

"We'll save him. Where is he?"

"I don't know, sir, but he just—"

An officer was calling to the captain.

"Last boat, sir," he shouted. "Everybody off but the few of us remaining."

"Good! Has anyone seen Mr. Bolton?"

"Oh, he got off," said a sailor, believing it in the confusion.

"All right, then. Step ahead of me, Garrity." And the young sailor was pushed ahead and the captain followed.

A boat touched the water and strong-armed men started rowing.

"Faster!" ordered the captain. "We want to get away from it."

The moon, coming out brightly now, poured its light on the water, and white-faced men swayed back and forth, carrying that boat to the others.

As it reached the other boats, Lane looked up, startled.

"Where is Mr. Bolton?" he asked.

"Bolton?" said the captain. "Isn't Mr. Bolton with you?"

"No. My God!" shouted one of the women.

"Put back!" ordered the captain. "We may still have time to save him!"

But as he spoke there was a terrific explosion and Bolton's yacht started to sink into the water.

"There it goes!" said the captain. "What time is it?"

Lane pulled an odd-looking watch out of his pocket.

"It's just twenty minutes past eight, sir," he said, blinking.

Long Shadows Lay Everywhere

Terrible, sinister shadows that seemed to reach out and pluck at the very heart-strings—to be clutching for a young girl's very life.

And from the depths of those shadows came the cries of men in anguish—cries that made the night a fearsome place.

But even those deadly shadows had to give way and when they had been dispelled, that which was laid bare proved most unusual and surprising.

LONG SHADOWS

By KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

A real mystery serial—begins in the NOVEMBER

MYSTERY STORIES

She labored heavily to raise the man's body to the porch.

Drouth

By JAMES HENRY THOMPSON

A merciless sun. A woman's desperate effort to save the last few drops of water. Drouth. And a human life hangs in the balance.

THE heat radiations from the earth were visible, palpable; beating, pounding with the unmercifulness of staves upon tender flesh. In all the landscape nothing was erect; everything drooped and was listless.

Little tender plants lay prone on the ground, slaughtered innocents; sturdy old trees, used to long tortures of heat and cold, sagged their branches. Even the hills, distant beyond a steely-blue translucent haze, seemed to shrink and tremble before the all-destroying heat.

The sun, nearing the western rim of its limit of day, was bronze, indurate, pitiless, hard as the brass of some unfeeling idol; terribly malignant. Watercourses were dry and the mud of their bottoms was cracked into sharp-edged fissures. Here and there were desiccated skins of frogs and lizards.

In ineffectual shade of trees the cattle crowded, suffering torments of flies rather than make the effort to switch their tails. Their hides constantly twitched to rid them of the pests that swarmed about them, singing a hot, metallic, malicious song; and the udders of the cows hung depressed. Birds twittered querulously and a hawk sailed in narrowing circles high up in enviable coolness.

Grasshoppers fiddled, unmindful of the heat. Their song added to

the irritation that was everywhere.

The horses hitched to a mowing machine had bloodshot eyes, and wherever the harness straps touched their skins there was a white froth of soapy lather. They moved slowly and stiffly to evade the torture of the effort of dragging the noisy machine.

The oats in the field—too thin a crop to be worth the pains of the usual cradling—crackled and rattled before the knife-bar of the mower and shed their grains to the earth. They were yellow and harshly dead and unmusically complaining.

The man on the metal seat of the mower, protected by a sheepskin pad lest the hot iron sear his flesh, rolled dizzily in his place. He grasped at the knife-bar lever to steady himself as he climbed unsteadily to the ground.

He removed his coarse, broad-brimmed straw hat and wiped at his head with a bandanna handkerchief whose red and yellow hotness seemed to accentuate the heat. He looked at the handkerchief appraisingly. There was no moisture there. His body was dry and brittle as though all its fluids had been evaporated; as dry and yellow as the drying oats.

From the crown of his hat there fell a pad of burdock leaves, placed there as a preventive against sunstroke, and he looked at them quizzically before he staggered in a circular reeling and then fell prone.

The shock of his falling body sent the dry oat stalks to chattering maliciously. The grasshoppers never ceased their monotonous stridor. A little puff of red dust arose from the spot where he had fallen.

The horses, their reins without the authoritative touch of their driver, started leisurely out of the field, the mower clattering behind them like some tremendous engine of war, leaving a trail of black and viscid grease spilling from its boxes.

The horses had their objective in the half-barrel in the barnyard that was their watering-place and that now stood empty, its hoops slipping from its dry and contracted staves. There the beasts stopped and neighed uneasily.

The heat beat against the curling shingles of the weather-beaten house and rolled back in visible waves. On the ridgepole a pair of doves cooed monotonously, determined that not even heat should cheat them of their amours.

Through the tiresomeness of their wooing the neighing of the horses reached the ears of the woman within doors, and she came to the sun-sweltered porch. Her hair hung dank and straight and her calico dress was wet with perspiration in half-moons under the armpits. Her face was red and blotched and her eyes as expressionless as those of a rat.

Despite the heat, she shivered slightly.

SHE wiped her face on a sleeve of her dress and slowly enough caught the significance of the driverless horses. With a sigh of exhaustion and weariness she scanned the fields, shading her eyes with cupped palms. The copper glare forced her eyelids to slits and her forehead to beady contractions.

Without evidence of emotion or excitement, she discovered what she sought and started for the oat-field, alternately wiping her damp hair away from her eyes and pulling at her thin skirts to free them from sweaty limbs. She sighed despairingly and threw her apron over her head as some sort of protection against the sun.

The woman did not hurry, but went at an even, tired pace almost

directly to the spot where the man had fallen.

In slow-moving deliberation she stooped and touched his face and found it hot and dry. She removed the apron from her head, sighed deeply again, laid it across the man's face, and turned to plod back to the house, never hastening her slow gait.

At the house she drained a bottle of water from a sweating earthen jug. Then she went to the barnyard, unhitched the horses from the mower and led them, unwilling, to be hitched to a flat stoneboat.

Standing with feet wide apart on the stoneboat, she drove the clumsy sled back to the oatfield. There she loaded the unconscious man with many tugging cruelties onto the boat and started the horses, after which she began to dab at his face with a scantily moistened corner of her apron.

At the house she labored heavily to raise the man's body to the porch and dragged it, heels knocking loosely on the uncovered floor, to a bed. The horses were left to wander back to the dry water-barrel, there to whinny in nervous discontent. The amorous doves continued their endless, untuneful protestations of love.

The woman found a paper, folded it carefully and creased it meticulously into a fan. With this implement she began to fan the stricken man. Every five strokes of the fan were punctured by a deep sigh and a slight pause in the metronomy of her motions. Occasionally she stole for herself the slight movement of air from the fan. Sparingly she used the water from the bottle to moisten the lips and forehead of the man.

There was no gentleness in any of her motions.

Steadily fanning, sighing and dabbing with the tepid water, she sat. The creak of the rockers of her chair on the bare floor synchronized with the regular cooing of the doves—followed it. Her eyes were listless, and she blew upward from her mouth now and then to drive the damp hair from them.

The heat rose in a steady crescendo of malignity, then seemed to reach a zenith beyond which it could mount no higher. The horses, discouraged, had ceased their whinnying, and there was no sound save the cooing of the doves and the timid creak of the rockers.

The woman shifted the fan from one hand to the other in vain attempts to find rest from fatigue. She was annoyed to helplessness.

Slowly the shadows across the floor lengthened. The man never moved and his breathing was almost imperceptible. The woman watched the shadows more closely than she watched him. She envied him his rest and his insensibility to the heat.

A tin clock on the kitchen shelf whirred with a sudden alarm. She remembered that she had not shut off the alarm lever that morning. So it was five o'clock. The heat would lessen now. The very thought brought relief, and she wiped her hair back as though preparing for an event.

SHE suddenly realized that she had been fanning the man and that he had made no response to the quickened air. She wondered how long she had been fanning him, and rubbed the muscles of her arm as though she could tell by their stiffened feel.

She dropped the fan and allowed her hands to fall at rest between her knees. Across the listless eyes, expressionless as those of a rat, there ran a flicker of fear, of confusion, of panic.

Through the open door there stole just the motion of a little breeze.

Even so slight a stirring of air came gratefully. It revived her and drove her to mental action. She felt gingerly of the man's parched brow and head, took up one of his dry hands and let it fall again; shook him by the shoulder impatiently.

Then she walked with no haste to the wall telephone, ground sternly at the crank of the bell and adjusted the receiver to her ear. She waited vainly and sighed angrily. She rang again, this time viciously, and again waited. Then she asked into the transmitter in a level voice:

"Can you get the doctor for me?"

Another wait, another impatient ringing of the bell, and she asked again, "Can you get the doctor for me?" in a voice as though the matter was not of great importance.

This time she had better success, and spoke into the phone:

"My man—sunstroke—come and see him." And then, in apologetic confusion, "Lars Nelson—yes, you better tonight—as quick as you can."

She hung up the receiver and walked to the kitchen without a glance at the man on the bed. The slight breeze would now take up the duty of fanning him. She busied herself with making some strong tea, of which she drank three cups avidly.

Her refreshments done, she left the house, took the harness off the horses and attended to the barnyard chores. With a heavy wooden yoke across her shoulders to support two wooden water buckets, she started for the spring, a quarter-mile distant from the house and at the first rise of the hills. There she filled the buckets from the mere trickle of water that seeped from between the rock strata and dripped into a sunken barrel, taking great care that no drop should be wasted. She noticed that scarcely a pailful remained in the barrel.

With the heavy load across her shoulders she started back across the fields, and the burden made no difference in her slowly-paced steps.

At the barnyard she measured the water carefully and justly distributed it between the two horses, the cow that was now dry awaiting calf, and a panful for the chickens. The doves ceased their lovemaking long enough to flutter down for a drink.

Without the yoke, but with one pail, the woman started back to the spring. She filled the pail three-quarters full and turned back to the house. That scant pail of water must meet all needs of the household for another day—drink and ablutions.

She noticed a covered buggy nearing the house on the dusty road. That must be the doctor. But she hurried no bit her apathetic pace. Before she had reached the house the doctor had entered there.

THE woman slowly pushed her way into the kitchen. She affixed a tin funnel to the neck of the earthen jug and poured the water from the pail into the jug. Not a drop was spilled. When she had twisted a cork into the jug she walked slowly to the room where the doctor was hurriedly preparing his fever thermometer and where the man lay motionless on the bed.

"Get me a glass of water," the doctor commanded. He was too used to the stolidity of these people to pay the woman even a curious glance.

She returned to the kitchen and poured from what remained in the pail enough water to half fill a glass. She did not touch the full, cool jug.

"More water; lots of it," commanded the doctor, as he frowned at the stingy glass. "Wring out cold cloths for his head. I should 've

thought you'd know enough to do that."

The woman shrugged her shoulders, but offered no word in assent. Slowly she returned to the kitchen and brought back with her the jug. Her lips were dry and her eyes were greedy; she thirsted greatly.

"That's all the water," she said in a tone of finality.

"There's more in the spring, isn't there? Get it!" replied the doctor impatiently. He was used to the closeness of these dirt farmers.

"No more than the animals need," countered the woman with her same dead-level hopelessness.

"Are they worth more than your man?" reproved the doctor, removing the thermometer from the pale, unmoving lips of his patient.

"The drouth—it has taken the water. We have no crops. If we do not save the animals we will have nothing." There was no heat or expression in the woman's statement of facts.

The doctor knew of the drouth. Had not the village waterworks refused him the right to sprinkle his well-kept lawn, and had not his pride been greatly humbled daily since that deprivation at the sight of that brown-dry sward?

But his spigots ran freely whenever he turned them and his horses had plenty to drink in their cool barn. He could not understand why water should not be more free in the country than in the restricted artificiality of the towns.

He looked at the woman angrily. Her impassiveness met him squarely and he flushed and spoke brutally:

"But, woman, it's life or death—water is. He has thermal fever. He *must* have water quickly, lots of it."

The woman only shrugged helpless shoulders.

The doctor's professional pride was pricked. He was the humanitarian now, and he felt the challenge offered him to do battle against death. He always grew strong and resourceful when confronted by this invisible opponent that dared dispute his skill and learning. He rarely thought of God. His tally of victories was in his favor.

"Then he must be gotten out of here to a hospital at once," he pronounced.

The woman shrugged again.

"Maybe so," she said, as if the matter was of no consequence.

"He can have water there," added the doctor, inconsequentially.

"Yes," assented the woman. And there was something in her inflection that added, "And there will be more left here for the animals and me."

The doctor was further angered. "Have you anything in which you can carry him? We'll have to hurry."

"The democrat wagon," answered the woman. "It has springs."

The doctor thought that her mention of springs was the first touch of consideration, gentleness, that she had displayed. "Get it here quickly," he commanded.

The woman did not hurry. She moved as leisurely as ever to the barn, hitched the tired horses, removed the rear seats from the flat wagon-bed and drove it listlessly to the house, where she backed it expertly to the porch and let down the tailboard in a competent and business-like manner.

"Get yourself ready," snapped the doctor.

"I'm ready," she replied. Her few words had a strange quality of carrying more inferences than appeared on the surface, and the doctor interpreted them to mean that she had nothing with which to make herself ready for a journey to the village.

BETWEEN them they loaded the

unconscious man on his mattress into the wagon. The woman clambered into the driver's seat.

"Drive slowly and keep freshly wet cloths on his head," instructed the doctor, as he lifted the jug to the front of the wagon.

The woman noticed the cork was gone from the jug, climbed down and found it in the house, returned to her seat and carefully corked the jug.

"Damn!" said the doctor. "You can get another jug of your precious water in town, so don't spare this."

Again the woman dismounted from her seat, went into the kitchen and returned with another jug to place in the wagon. She was utterly oblivious of any humor in her action and of the doctor's mounting impatience.

"Now hurry up," called the doctor. "I'll follow right behind."

The case amused him. The apathy of the woman, her stolidness, her miserly care of the water, her apparent indifference to the man's sufferings, were but novel manifestations of the queer tricks of the people of this country. He felt rather superior and proud of his town culture, and also, he felt a peculiar masculine sympathy for the man.

The procession moved off down the road, little spurts of smoke-like dust rising from the horses' hoofs and the wheel tires, for all the world as though the road were paved with dried puff-balls.

During the five-mile drive between the farm and the town the doctor shouted at intervals: "Keep his head wet." He swore under his breath when the woman stopped her team at a village drinking fountain and allowed them a long drink.

At the hospital the sick man was unloaded at the receiving platform and hurried away to a ward. The woman, conscious of the white-coated orderlies and their efficiency, did not leave her seat on the wagon. She watched with eye expressionless as those of a rat while the wheeled hospital cot carried him from sight.

The doctor grunted at her apparent callousness, winked at a pretty nurse and gave some quick directions.

"Will you stay here?" he asked of the woman on the wagon.

"No," she replied, and gathered up the loose reins.

"I'll telephone you, then, and tell you how he gets along," suggested the doctor.

"Yes," she returned, and clicked to her horses in signal of departure.

She did not ask questions nor give directions; she seemed content to leave her husband to a fate she could not control.

At the drinking fountain she stopped again, filled the two jugs to brimming and attempted to force the horses to further unwanted libations.

Once on her way homeward she hummed a brief snatch of an old Norwegian folk tune.

Dual Personalities

By MARTHA NEUMARK

WHEN Edgar Allan Poe wrote a short story about a certain "Mr. Wilson," describing the dual nature of the man, and when Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his remarkable characterization of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," people accepted these creatures as products of highly imaginative brains. When Dr. Jekyll's attempts to convert himself into the disreputable Hyde by mysterious chemical concoctions were first heard about, they were topics for amused conversation.

With the acceptance of Sigmund Freud, however, and increasing reverence for the tenets of psychoanalysis, scientists have discovered innumerable examples of "dual personality." The most famous of these cases centers around Sally Beauchamp.

By actual tests it was found that she could assume six different personalities at various times, which were classified as B1, B2, etc.

Apparently B3 was her normal composure, when Miss Beauchamp was the ordinary college girl, intelligent, somewhat reticent, calm, overly timid.

B4, or Sally, was her "dominant" personality, when she became mischievous, unkindly, boisterous. As Sally she recognized the fact that she often merged into other personalities, hating B3 particularly.

The physician who was attempting to cure Miss Beauchamp, and to merge the six personalities into that of the orderly B3, learned to summon B3 at will by shocking Sally with the burning end of a cigarette on her hand.

Sally soon caught on to this method. She knew that B3 hated walking or any other kind of exercise. So she would take car rides to the end of the line and walk for miles out into the country, with only a nickel in her pocket. make a collection of snakes and toads, and send them parcel post to B3—would have to walk all those miles back to the street car.

Sally knew that B3 feared and hated reptiles of any sort. So she would make a collection of snakes and toads, and send them p areel post to B3—who would have a fit when she opened the parcel.

By long and consistent treatment over a long period of time, the physician prevailed over the dominant personality and restored Miss Beauchamp to her so-called normal personality.

"You've been given too much rope! But—I'll give you more!"

Too Much Rope

By LILIAS REBARER

An unruly boy cast out from his ancestral home. And a shy little sweetheart waiting patiently. They come to grips with a band of desperadoes aided and abetted by a jealousy-maddened girl. And watch the result!

ALICE would not sit down in my presence. I was too "high" for that.

She would not occupy a chair, I mean. But she would squat on her ample heels, near the door, if I insisted. And she had no reference to my gameness in qualifying me as high. All white folks were either high or low to Alice. Some were very high indeed.

Notably old Judge Overdean. He was so high in Alice's estimation that she stood on tiptoes and stretched her rounded arms as far as they would go to indicate his social exaltation.

Alice was one of those ageless persons one encounters in the old South; a lady of color—most distinctly a lady, and most richly colored—with manners unequaled anywhere.

"Alice is a confidential girl, sir," the janitor of the "Efficiency Apartments" had told me when I asked him to get me a maid. And although at the time I decided that he had intended to use the word "competent" instead of "confidential," I afterward wondered whether he had not realized what he was saying. For, after a few weeks there was hardly anything I didn't know about

the "high white folks" among whom I lived.

I had expected to be bored in this tiny southwest town, and I speedily discovered that I would be dead if I continued to eat in its abominable restaurants. I defy anyone to beat the "home cooking" of the South for its excellence—and I defy anyone to rival the evils of its restaurant cooking.

Therefore Alice, and a number of lonely meals at which she regaled me with incredibly eatable viands and vegetables and, while I smoked after dinner, squatted on the floor and told me tales of the high ones she had worked for. Alice had, as a matter of fact, worked for nearly every high family in Kentucky—and I soon guessed that this remarkable experience was not due to any incompetency on the part of Alice, but to temperamental vagaries thoroughly understood between mistress and maid.

Eventually, when as a care-free bachelor I became very popular in Kentuckian society, I was somewhat ashamed of sitting at table with a dozen or so eminently respectable and dignified personages and concealing from them what I knew about them. But, as a matter of fact, had I once started to reveal my guilty knowledge the ensuing upheaval would so thoroughly have engulfed Kentuckian society that I decided against it.

I became hardened to dining with the lady who had once started to elope with her husband's secretary, only to be saved by Alice; or to lunching with the famous physician who bore several carefully concealed scars, resulting from the marksmanship of the husbands of certain female patients. Or, even, to playing bridge with the unmarried personage who had traveled so widely, after a certain Beau Ideal of the countryside had married and left Kentucky.

IT WAS this Beau Ideal that Alice loved most to recall.

"He was sure hard to manage," she told me, smiling in affectionate reminiscence.

"When he was less'n two years old Ah used to pretend Ah was goin' to chastise him, but it didn't do no good. Every day after his bath he'd run, naked, right out onto the porch and stan' there shoutin', till the old missus came out and stopped him. She was a gay young piece herself, however, and she wasn't too hard on the baby. No, sir!

"Such a pretty baby, all white—white skin and yellow curls! His mammy used to snatch him up, all naked like that, off the porch, scolding and kissing him so hard! Natcherally, he just went out next day and did the same thing! Knew he shouldn't—but didn't know why. Just did it, because they told—we-all told him, he shouldn't.

"An' that's the way he grew up, an' that's the way he nearly lost his life—and his father's!

"Yes, sir! Judge Overdean—his family—it's away up high, sir. Don't expect you-all to understand that, comin' from so far No'th. 'Cause you-all peoples up there, you don't go so much by your descendants.

"Down South here, sir, everybody pays a lot of attention to their descendants. They kin trace some of 'em back to Noah! Yes, sir!"

Alice's very black eyes dilated as she dwelt on the incredible lineage of her employers. And I had not the heart to correct her English and suggest that it was ancestry in which they were interested, not progeny.

"Yes, sir," she continued, "down here, it's not so much how much

money you've got, as who your descendants was! Judge Overdean always claimed that Queen Elizabeth was one of his descendants!

"And when you remember, sir, that she cut off the head of that young and lovely queen of Scotland, and then, if you could have sat in Judge Overdean's court and heard him send white and dark alike up the Mississippi, on them Chain Gangs! Well, you'd 'a' known very well, sir, that it was only the Laws of this Great Country (the capitals are Alice's) that kep' him from cuttin' their heads off, too!

"AND whatever kep' him from cuttin' off the head of Barry Overdean before he was even twenty, I don't know, sir. 'Cause long before that, old Miss' Overdean—she wasn't forty—died, like she was tired protectin' Barry from his father. Ah don't know what else killed her so quick, sir, 'ceptin' she was tired. She looked so lovely in her coffin, and she'd lef' provisions for all her servants to be allowed to view the corpse and come to the funeral.

"Barry made me go first. And he came with me, holdin' on to my ol' black hand and whisperin': 'Alice, Ah can't live now, without mother!'

"But he did, sir. Like all of us, he got over his grief an' went on livin' an' aggravatin' his father. Only now he was worse'n ever. Nights, before ol' missus died, he'd come in real early, sir—'fore midnight, anyway. An' he never got real intoxicated: that is, not what a *gentleman'd* call intoxicated. It'd never do for our men to get that way. No, sir.

"My brother, now, that year of the Big Wind, when it broke like a pistol-shot 'round every street corner—my mother almost turned white, sir; she thought it was my brother shootin' somebody up, 'cause he'd just gone out with only two drinks of Moon in him. But that's what Moon does to colored folks, sir. White folks don't notice it.

"BARRY went on livin' after his pretty mother died, but he didn't put no check on himself now at all, sir. By the grace of God, sir, I stayed awake all night the first time he stayed out all night. An' that was only three weeks after she died.

"It was dawn when he come home, an' I heard his footsteps stumblin' up the porch, and I knew what my kind missus would 'a' done if she'd been alive, so I got up and started to do it. But Lord, sir, somethin' awful had happened. I only got as far as the front hall when I stopped short.

"I'm only a maiden lady, sir, you might say, an' Ah'd never seen a naked man before. And not even Mr. Barry since he'd growed up. But there he was, just like Adam, laughin' sof'ly to himself, an' wriggling upstairs to his bedroom without a stitch on!

"First of all, I was goin' to cry for help. Then the good Lord shut my mouth and tol' me what to do. I waited until I heard him go into his own room and shut the door, an' then I sneaked out to the porch.

"It was jus' like the Lord was whisperin' in my ear—jus' like He done tol' me. The poor lamb had taken all his clothes off on the porch an' lef' 'em there—all his nice, fine clothes an' his gold watch and chain an' his money!

"Well, sir, Ah didn't have to wait for no message from the Lord when I seen that sight. Ah jus' scooped everything up in mah arms and beat it for mah own room.

"An' there I stayed, shut in tight, until Ah knew the old master was

gone off to judge the white and the black and sen' 'em up the river, and then I sneaks up to Mr. Barry's room. He was jus' wakin' up an' wonderin' where his clothes an' his money an' everythin' was!

"And didn't Ah scold him, sah? Ah never stopped talkin' for nearly two hours. An' first he laughed, an' then he cried.

"And then he began to beg for food—all rolled up in the big bed, with the blue silk coverlet tucked in under his chin, and his golden hair all tossed up and curly, his skin so white an' rosy, jus' like he'd never stayed out all night in his life. He was the handsomes' young white man in all Kentucky, sah, bar none! Ah'm tellin' you!"

This expression meant that it would be suicide to combat Alice's statement. Whatever she really *told* you was *so*, and there would be no use denying it.

"The handsomes'," she repeated challengingly, "an' the braves', an' the bes' dressed. He was sure some dude! All his clothes come from London, sah; he never trafficked with New York. All his canes, too, and his spo't clothes came from Scotland, an' his cigarettes was imported and had his crest on 'em.

"An' he never carried money in his pockets, sah—only gold. Yes, sah! Nothin' but gold! 'Course there was silver change, too, but the minute he got change he'd throw the silver at some colored person he knew (Alice was always very respectful in her references to her own race) an' say: 'Take that, you ol' black sinner.' Consequently, sah, Mr. Barry was always well accompanied by persons of mah own color everywhere he went. Yes, sah.

"But there ain't none of 'em ever stole nothin' off him, sah, never!"

Her black eyes snapped fiercely as she made this authoritative statement.

"No, sah, not one of 'em! Ah knows. At firs' Ah was afraid to trust the colored persons even in his own house, but after a while, after Ah'd watched carefully, Ah saw that, deductin' what he'd spend on his evenin's, there was always as much gold in his pockets when he came in as when he went out.

"But that mornin', sah, Ah reminds him of what'd have happened if ol' Master'd found his clothes full of gold on the po'ch, and warned him to be more careful.

"An' he laughed an' said he didn't need to be careful—his mother had lef' him her own fortune, an' he didn't care what the Governor liked or didn't like. That was the name all young men gave their fathers in them days, sir—Governor.

"NOW, SIR, some day you're goin' to be invited to play bridge, an' you're goin' to meet Miss Phyllis Cole. She's not so young now, but she was very young then, sir, and she worshiped the groun' Mr. Barry walked on.

"She'd have let him walk on her, if it'd done any good. But she knew it wouldn't, an' she was very high, too—all her family, away up—almost as high as the Judge's. And he wanted her for a daughter-in-law and so, presently, Mr. Barry couldn't go no place excep' saloons that he didn't run into Miss Phyllis gazin' meanin'ly into his eyes.

"She had kinder nice eyes herself, and she was a little thing, with lots of black hair, like satin. But she warn't his style. An' moreover, there was someone else who was. But he didn't dare go right off and get engaged to *her*, 'cause the Judge would have disinherited him. An' his ma's fortune was gettin' so low he couldn't afford that.

"So the more Miss Phyllis chased him, the harder he run from her, and the more he drank an' played cards. He was playin' the cards, Ah reckon, to get back his losses. But, o' course, he jus' kep' on losin' more.

"An' in spite o' all that drinkin' an' carousin' he was the handsomes' man you ever seen. Yes, sah! An' such a swell! Folks thought he was the Prince of Wales when he'd walk down the street at tea-time. Yes, *sah!* Strangers *did*.

"Well, Ah was gettin' ol' an' fat, an' sleepin' better'n Ah ought. An' Ah knew if ever his pa found Barry's clo's on the po'ch an' the money in his pockets like that, it would be mah boy's finish.

"So Ah buys an alarm clock, and sets it for five every mornin'. The Judge never got up before six, so that give me a whole hour to put ev'rything right.

"An' one mornin', sah, the alarm didn't go off!

"Ah don' know whether Ah forgot to win' it, or whether the works went wrong jus' to accommodate Fate. But, anyway, the Judge foun' Barry's clo's, right down to his underwear, and went right upstairs an' made the boy get out an' leave the house—without a cent, as Ah learned afterwards, in his pocket. For he'd spent his last dollar from his mother's estate! Yes, sah!"

ALICE paused just here and I closed my eyes, luxuriating in the picture she had drawn for me of that gay young blade of the days before the War, cutting a wide swathe in his native town, enjoying the sighs of the susceptible female, and the profound envy of his male acquaintances; I could also picture the horror and shame that swooped upon him when he fell from his high estate.

"Yes, sah," Alice continued in a subdued tone that indicated how profoundly that crisis had affected her. "Cast him off—came down to the po'ch steps himself to see that he went right out the front gate and to lock it after him.

"It was a lovely day, sah; an' the sun shone right on Mr. Barry's bare head, and he was holdin' it up, laughin', his blue eyes shinin' with hurt pride and pretended scorn. An' Ah guess the ol' Judge's heart was touched, hard as it was. He stood there, holdin' the gate, hesitatin'. An' then he says, sudden:

" 'Why you been actin' like this, Barry? What have I done to deserve it from you? What ever did I demand of you excep' that you keep gentlemen's hours and be in your bed by eleven o'clock at night?'

"Well, sir, I held my breath, hopin' that everythin' would be made up. But what does Mr. Barry do? He jus' laughs, sneerin'ly, an' says:

" 'That's just it. I'm a man. The idea of tellin' me when to go to bed! The only trouble between us, Governor, is that you haven't given me rope enough!'

"The old man starts and snarls back: 'Not enough? I've given you too much! But—I'll give you more!'

"An' with that he runs out to the horseblock and disentangles the rope used to tie the horses and flings it around his head like a lasso and it falls, swish, on Barry's neck, an' the ol' master draws it taut—an' Ah yells! An' then, o' course, the Judge realizes what he's doin' an' lets go and falls down on the horseblock, his face in his hands.

"All this time Mr. Barry's face is a picture. Almost choked, for a second, it was fiery red, as if his blood would burst through. He had a little bag in his hands—a little black bag, sir. And first he

loosens the rope, an' then he opens the bag an' drops the rope into it, just as his father looks up.

"'Thank you, sir,' he says to the old Judge. 'I'll keep this, and give it to you back some day—when I can give a better account of myself. Good-by!'

"And with that he is off down the road towards the hills—an' that was the last we seen of him."

"The last?"

ALICE wiped her eyes and shook her head; she stood up for a moment to rest the muscles in her calves, and then she squatted again; her eyes were shining more brightly than ever.

"'Scuse me," she said apologetically. "Ah done got carried away with mah own eloquence. The ol' Judge always said that was mah worst fault. 'Course we saw him again, but not for a long time.

"Not before Judge Overdean was mighty sorry he'd given him so much rope—but not the kin' that Barry could change into gold. 'Course, if that *had* been the las' we seen of Barry it would have been only a judgment on his father."

Alice paused and sighed regretfully; I perceived that a "best selling" author was lost in her; for the sake of the story, how much better it would have been if that had been the last seen of Barry Overdean!

"Well, sah, the Judge was a mighty proud ol' man, but he loved that boy in his own way. An' after Ah'd tol' him that Ah jus' thought Barry's takin' his clo's off on the po'ch like that only happened that once, an' that Ah guessed it was due to his being so drunk he thought he was a baby again, he done got very res'less — very res'less. It wasn't more than a month before he began makin' cautious inquiries as to whether anybody'd seen Barry.

"An' he took partic'lar pains to increase mah salary—knowin' very well that if Ah knew where Barry was, Ah would see that he didn't starve.

"But, Lord! Barry'd done gone off up into the hills with the moonshiners. An' it was as much as your life was worth to call on a 'shiner without an invitation! Ah worried along a while, an' then Ah decided ter take the pastor of our flock into mah confidence.

"Pastor White—one of the bes' men that ever lived! Lord, how he could pray! He could pray you right into repentance and into the river where he baptized, right up to Heaven's gate! Yes, sah! An' he was always prayin', even when he was moonshinin'. He was a very holy man!"

"And yet he was a moonshiner!" I exclaimed incredulously.

"That wasn't nothin' against him. No one held it against him. Moonshine was always made in these parts, and always will be. Our gentlemen always drank it in preference to anything excep' Bourbon, an' in those days there wasn't always enough Kentucky Bourbon to go aroun', although it was before prohibition.

"No, sah! Pastor White used to get down on his knees and pray while the mash was cookin', and Judge Overdean himself said it improved the whisky. Yes, sah!

"Well, Ah was mighty glad Ah took mah Pastor into mah confidence; yes, sah. For he tol' me right off that mah poor young master had gone up into them hills with the worst kind of moonshiners there was in Kentucky.

"They was called 'The Shoot-First' Shiners—and they did jus' that. Their customers was always forbid to come near the stills, but jus' called at nooks lower down an'

foun' their Moon, and left the money for it.

"So Master Barry, when he got turned out without a nickel, had gone to his regular nook, for he was one of their bes' customers, an' waited until someone came. He'd explained his situation, an' they'd allowed him to join them.

"There wasn't no use my thinkin' o' goin' up to their caves, for the instant mah ol' black head had peered above the grade it'd 'a' been shot off. Lord, Ah was in a mess!

"Pastor White an' me' we gets down on our hands an' knees an' prays an' prays, till you could have heard us three miles away. An' then he gets up and pours a glass of Moon an' tosses it down.

"An' then he gets his inspiration. It was so simple Ah often wondered afterwards why Ah couldn't 'a' thought of it without all that prayin'.

"SO, that night when the Judge comes home, Ah opens up boldly—although Ah never was afraid of Judge Overdean. An' he knew it. The minute Ah opened mah mouth, he dropped his knife and fork an' listened without a word.

"'Your son,' Ah says, 'has got more rope than you bargained for—more than you meant to give him, Ah reckon. Too much, like you said yourself—for he's joined the 'Shoot-First Moonshiners.'

"He never says a word, but drops his head on his hands and groans. It was the first human sound Ah ever heard him make, an' Ah began to feel sorry for him.

"Still Ah couldn't let him off without a warnin'. 'It's your own fault,' Ah says. 'That boy never done no harm to anyone excep' hisself. An' if you'd only let him marry that cute little trick over to Lexington, instead of Miss Phyllis, he'd be here with you right now.'

"'If only he were!' he groaned, between his fingers. 'Alice, tell me, how can I get my boy back?'

"'Ah'm comin' to that,' Ah tells him. 'Tain't safe for none of us to go up into them hills without bein' expected. But Ah knows one of the places where they deposits liquor for their customers an' Ah'll go up there an' leave an order.

"'Now, more'n likely, as it's where young Master Barry's frien's come for their liquor, he'll come down hisself to get an excuse for a chat with his ol' pals. An' you can go for that liquor, instead of me—an' that'll give you a chance ter apologize.'

"Ah has said that Ah wasn't afraid of the ol' Judge. But Ah will admit that when Ah suggested apology to that proud ol' devil, mah voice sunk a little. An' he was on his feet in a minute, his eyes blazin'. An' he shouts, so's all the world could hear, that he'd never apologize to no such blackhearted ingrate as Barry Overdean.

"But Ah held mah groun' an' looked him straight and steady in the eye. An' presently he wilted like he was havin' a stroke, an' he sunk into his chair, cryin', an' stretchin' out his han's ter me, an' sayin': 'Yes, Ah will, Alice, whatever you say, anything you say. An' call up Miss Dora'—Dora was the little trick that lived in Lexington—'an' ask her to come over an' be at the re-union.'

"'An' what about Miss Phyllis?' Ah demands.

"'Ah'll attend to her,' he says weakly, an' with that Ah lef' him.

"NOW, sah, it's one of the curiousest things in the world the way Fate works. There was I settin' off on mah errand of mercy, an' Ah

couldn't think of what name to ask for that liquor in. You see, the way the thing was done—you'd write a name on a slip of paper an' fold it up and stick it in the tree-hole, an' the Shiners would find it an' come back and leave the liquor in the same place.

"But Ah couldn't think of any name to write on that slip of paper—no name that would soun' reasonable to Barry. He'd suspect mah name, an', anyway, he knew I could get all the Moon I wanted from Pastor White. An', accordin' to mah pastor, he was doin' a rushin' business with his own frien's.

"So, Ah was jes' passin' Miss Phyllis' house, an' an idea pops into my mind. You see, sah, Ah never cared much for that young lady, she bein' so dark and kinder prowlin' around always like she was spyin' on folks.

"Ah knew she'd done a heap of complainin' about Master Barry, and right to his own pa, too. Yes, sah. So, Ah thought Ah'd kinder let her know the way the wind was blowin', an' put through a call to Miss Dora at the same time.

"Ah know'd her cook well. So Ah goes in the back door an' says, as loud as I kin, 'cause Ah knew Miss Phyllis was always listenin' 'round;

"'Please, ma'am, let me use yo' phone; ours is done got out of order.' Phones was new in them days, and very apt to get out of order.

"'Go ahead,' says Delia, an' Ah steps out in the hall. An' sure enough, there was Miss Phyllis out in the hall. Course she asked me quick an' sharp if we'd heard from Master Barry.

"An' Ah tol' her all Ah knew, an' how Ah was settin' out to start negotiations between him an' his pa. But first Ah tol' her the ol' Judge had asked me to invite Miss Dora over for a party he was goin' to give to celebrate the reunion.

"It was dark in that hall. Yes, sah—real dark. But Ah could see the awful look that came in Miss Phyllis' face, first faint and funny, like she was dyin', an' then jus' when Ah began to cuss mahself for bein' an interferin' ol' fool, she turns away so's Ah couldn't see her face, an' she says: 'Ah didn't know you could write, Alice.'

"Well, Ah couldn't write very well in them days, an' that's a fac'. An' it occurred to me that perhaps Master Barry wouldn't be able to read mah writin'. An', besides, Ah was sorry for the blow Ah'd jus' given her. Ain't women folks funny, sir? Kinder mean to each other, an' then so sorry for it, immediate.

"So Ah says: 'Would you write it for me, Miss Phyllis?"

"An' she says: 'Better yet, I'll drive you up to the hole, too—oh, Ah knows the place!'

"An' she said that with a kinder bitterness. An' Ah understood what she meant, 'cause everybody knew that her father was a drunkard. 'I'll leave a note for pa at the same time,' she says.

"So Ah telephones to Miss Dora, but Ah kinder softens the message, 'cause Ah knew Miss Phyllis could hear, although she was away off in the front parlor. An' Ah jus' says Ah wanted to know would her pa mind if we used his name to bring Master Barry back from the Shiners.

"An' she says, 'No, indeed,' so quick an' grateful. An' her sweet voice was all full of happiness, as she said that her pa needed some Moon, anyway, an' they'd drive over the next day an' get it.

"Well, Miss Phyllis drove like a man, sah—jus' like a man, lolling in her seat, lookin' straight ahead, the reins in her lap, an' never a word as we went like lightin' over the good roads, nor even when we began to crawl up those twistin' mountain trails.

"At last we come to the hole, an' she pulls her horse up short an' jumps out, grabbin' the note out of my hand.

"'Don't move, Alice,' she says. 'I know that hole. I'll drop 'em both in.'

"Well, of course, Ah was takin' on flesh even then, sah, an' Ah couldn't jump out like that. So Ah sits still, while off she goes an', as Ah learns later, deposits only her own note, which read:

"'Don't come near this depot again—the Revenuers are watchin' it.'

"CAN YOU beat that? Now you see, sah, ef Ah hadn't been so smart as to let Miss Phyllis know she was goin' to lose Mr. Barry after all, what happened the next day never would have happened.

"The ol' Judge, sah, he and Dora and Dora's father all drive out to the hole, with me settin' in the back to show 'em the way. An', course, they sits there for nearly an hour, an' no sign of Barry, an' no liquor, no nothin'! The note was gone, of course—so they knew somebody 'd been there.

"An' the ol' Judge is first anxious, an' then impatient, an' then alarmed. An' last he gets moist around the eyes, an' he turns on Dora's father an' says defiantly: 'Ah'm goin' to find mah boy.' Course nobody 'd said he shouldn't, but Dora's father nodded encouragingly, an' Dora eagerly, an' off he sets, ignorin' mah warnin's, an' disappearin' among the trees, mountin' up the hill.

"Course the Shiners was always watchin' for heads comin' up that long, windin' path to their still on the top of the mountain; but, with that warnin' in their hands, they was watchin' sharper than ever. Master Barry had offered to investigate the country roun' while they watched the path, an' so it happened that ol' Judge Overdean foun' hisself among total strangers, with five guns pointin' straight at his ol' heart.

"Course, he always boasted afterward that he wasn't afraid, an' Ah wasn't there to deny it. He always said that the first thing that caught his attention was a piece of rope one man was holdin'. I had a familiar look, he says, an' right away he begun to suspect it was the rope he had lassooed Barry with.

"There wasn't never a sound until he tried to speak, an' then they ordered him to keep quiet. They weren't anxious to advertise their whereabouts to whatever other folks might be lower down the mountain, an' they didn't care about shootin'. So they'd had the happy thought to *hang* the revenooers when they appeared!

"An so, before he could realize what was happenin', the rope was around his neck—the very rope he'd thrown around Barry's neck—an' the other end was bein' drawed over a hefty tree branch. His feet was off the ground, his eyes was bulgin' —in fac', the poor Judge was mercifully gone unconscious—when up from behind comes Master Barry, sees who it is on the rope, realizes there isn't a minute to lose, an' then, in spite of what he knew would be the consequences, shoots, an' shoots straight.

"The rope was shattered, the ol' Judge fell to the groun' so hard he come to—an' the next minute he an' Master Barry was fightin' side by side against the wickedest moonshiners that Kentucky ever knew.

"The shots came so fast and furious now—the ol' Judge never traveled without a gun on his hip—that the row was bound to be heard some ways off. An' Dora's father climbs out of the carriage an' rushes

off up the mountain, his hand on his hip.

"In those days young ladies knew better than to rush in where men are fightin', an Ah knew it was mah duty to attend the young lady. But, Lord, wasn't Ah glad to see mah pastor come runnin' up the trail with five of his own shiners, an' all of 'em packin' guns!

"Ah needn't tell you, sah, that Pastor White rescued the ol' Judge and Barry, an' that their wounds healed. But Ah do wish Ah could remember the prayer of gratitude mah pastor sent up to Heaven when ol' Judge Overdean turned in a verdict of 'justifiable homicide' without ever takin' Pastor White to co't.

"Yes, sah, he did it right there and then, on that mountain-side, jus' below the still, while Dora an' I was cryin' an' bindin' up their arms an' legs wif our underskirts—young ladies wore white pettico'ts in them days, thank the Lord! Right there, Judge Overdean convened his co't, as he said the law allowed him to, and exonerated all them niggers. An' we-all drove off finally, excep' Pastor White an' his men, who had gone up to pray some more beside the still.

"YES, SAH. That was a great day. Everyone of them Shiners was lyin' stiff and useless on the mountain trail. An' there weren't none to mourn 'em, 'cause ev'ry one of 'em had at least a dozen notches on his gun—an' Pastor White was soon turnin' out better Moon than those white devils ever thought of doin'.

"An' off we drove, home at last. Ain't that a sweet word—'home'? Ah knowed a white woman once what used to say: 'Home is where the heart is.' Miss Dora's heart was inside Barry's, and his was inside hers, an' the Judge's was inside his son's—so they'd all come home, like.

"Course we had to pass Miss Phyllis' house on the way to the Judge's mansion, an' she was lookin' out the window—an' she started back and disappeared into the shadders. But Ah seen Master Barry's face turn pale. An' Ah wasn't surprised when he an' Miss Dora eloped that night."

"How come," I asked, adopting the vernacular of my temporary home, "that you are not living with Master Barry and Miss Dora?"

"Bless youah heart, Ah am!" exclaimed Alice, her great black eyes very round, indeed, with astonishment that I should be so ignorant of the facts. "Ah'm jus' on a vacation, while they-all's in Europe. They calls it their eighteenth or nineteenth honeymoon, an' this time they took the boy an' girl with 'em—an' Ah's gettin' too ol' to travel. So Ah'm jus' takin' a vacation.

"Yes, sah. This speck of housekeepin' for you is what Ah calls a vacation. An' you wouldn't have got me at that, if Alexander, the colored gentleman who janits for these apartments, hadn't asked me special."

The telephone rang and Alice started to answer it.

"Wait a bit," I said, "I think that's your Miss Phyllis. I forgot to tell you that I have met her, and that she invited me to play bridge tonight. Owing to your fascinating story I'm a bit late."

"Humph!" exclaimed Alice as she went for my hat and coat. "Might know a bachelor couldn't live long in this town without bein' tracked down by that woman."

At Mounet's

By WOLCOTT LeCLEAR BEARD

SHRIEKS of Gallic rage pierced the morning air. Also they pierced my blissful unconsciousness and made me open my eyes. I didn't want to wake up from the first few hours of really restful sleep I'd had in weeks. It made me very cross.

By the window on the opposite side of the room sat Patsy Burke. He had been putting a shoe and sock on my leg—not the one I was born with, to be sure, but certainly mine. I'd paid enough for the thing.

That leg still rested across his knee. But Patsy was looking down into the back-yard of the house opposite mine, from which the shrieks still were coming.

I knew the voice; it was that of Antoine, chef of the Maison Mounet. He was a big, softish man whose face reminded me of a suet pudding, with dried currants for eyes.

He insisted that his profession was that of "culinary artist"; and like some other artists, especially Greenwich Village artists, he was afflicted at times with what he himself described as "temperamental ebullitions".

This, apparently, was one of them. I found his Alsatian French hard to understand, but nevertheless gathered that he was calling the vengeance of Heaven upon the head of some person not specified.

His ebullition stopped short when an acid feminine voice, also speaking in French, cut into it with the remark that he was "a species of pig". That well-selected expression pleased me so much that when Patsy allowed that expensive leg of mine to slip off his knee and fall on the

floor I didn't even swear at him, but grinned quite amiably.

"That last speech must have been made by Madame Mounet," I observed.

"It was made by Mike Mooney's wife," growled Patsy. "That 'Madahm' stuff, and a decent name like Mooney spelled all cock-eyed, makes me sick."

"Try to have some sense!" I snapped, much annoyed. "Madame is a Frenchwoman, though her husband's Irish. But even so, she changed the spelling for business reasons only. Imagine a sign that read 'Maison Mooney, Restaurant Français'! Nobody knows better than Mike Mooney himself what a joke that would be."

"It ain't more of a joke than I'll make of that French-Dutch he-cook if he don't watch his step with me," returned Patsy.

And, before I could frame an adequate reproof, he picked me up, carried me to the bathroom, plunged me into a tub of water that was too hot and left me there.

Patsy, it should be explained, was a corporal of my battery and also my personal "striker" during the late war, which was not so "late" then as it is now.

After a bit of H. E. shell in my thigh made my military service a thing of the past, he remained with me as my henchman and, in fact, as my entire domestic staff, when I went to live in Greenwich Village.

And Patsy and I live there, be it said, not for the reason that we thirst for capitalistic gore, artistic self-expression or anything like that, but simply because I inherited the old house, together with a very moderate income, just before we came home from France.

As I said, the bath was too hot, and I said so with all the emphasis that army experience enabled me to use. But Patsy, without paying the slightest attention to my remonstrance, proceeded to flay my back with a rough towel as though he didn't hear a word; and I don't believe he did. After a little he interrupted me.

"Cap'n, you know Tessie," he burst forth. "You've knowed her ever since she was a kid."

True enough; but even so I had not known Tessie, Mike's and Madame's little daughter, for so very long. She had seemed to grow, almost overnight, from a pretty and winsome child to an even more winsome and far prettier young woman.

It was hard for me to realize that she had grown up, but upon glancing up at Patsy I perceived that he realized it readily enough. When his eyes met mine his face turned as red as the hair that crowned it.

"I see," said I. "I fear you've been making an ass of yourself, Patsy."

"Yes, sir," he replied. "You see, I write a note to Tessie and hide it in their kitchen. She knows where it is, but somehow that pie-faced cook, he gets to it first. That's what made him bawl out the sun, moon and stars, like you heard him doin'.

"Now he'll go show the note to Tessie's mother, who's sore on me because she wants Tess to marry that near-French grub-butcher—to keep him in the fam'ly, I s'pose. And me? Cap'n, I'm goin' to push that gink's nose so far into his face that it'll stick out like a wart on the back of his neck!"

This was disconcerting. I didn't want our present comfortable scheme of life to be interrupted. Antoine, moreover, must have weighed half as much again as Patsy, and stood six inches higher, with a proportionately longer reach. Also he was—or at any rate he claimed to be—an ex-

pert in the *savate*, that four-footed French system of boxing.

As Patsy helped me out of the tub and into my clothes I did not fail to mention these latter facts and to elaborate on them at some length. But my henchman, I regret to say, remained visibly unimpressed.

"That goop!" he cried, fairly snorting with scorn. "Why, he can't swing them fat legs and arms of his much faster'n a ferry-boat can swing. Besides, I learned something in France myself, if it comes to that.

"But I'll lay off that bird—if he'll let me—till after I fetch your breakfas'. I'm a-goin' after it now. Here's your crutches, sir."

WITH this dubious assurance I was obliged to content myself, for Patsy departed so quickly as to preclude the possibility of further conversation.

But my mind was not at ease—and neither, for that matter, was my body. That bought leg of mine hurt me, and was squeaky in its hinges besides. I resolved to have Patsy take it back to the maker after breakfast for repairs. In the meantime I hobbled downstairs and seated myself at a table by a window directly below the one in my bedroom.

On the corner of the street below, its back diagonally facing me, stood what once had been Mike Mooney's saloon. Now its lower floors and also those of the two adjoining houses were occupied by "Mme. Mounet's" restaurant, while the upper stories of all three houses served as a residence for the Mooney-Mounet household.

It was the restaurant kitchen that directly faced me, its doors and windows wide open, so that practically its entire interior could be seen.

With its gleaming utensils and spotless cleanliness, it always was a pleasant sight. Now, together with the yards back of it, it was like a stage that was set for some French comedy.

There was that huge, likable old blackguard, Mike Mooney himself, who was lurking, invisible from the kitchen, behind a trellis with some scrawny vines on it.

There was Patsy, peeping through the partly open door of communication that had been cut in my back fence in order to make sure that the coast was clear.

There was Madame, buxom and handsome, about to make her exit from the kitchen with an air of duty well done.

There was Tessie, angry and resentful, from which I inferred that Madame's duty had consisted largely in a severe lecture to her only child.

There also was Antoine, his suet-pudding face fairly oozing fatuous self-satisfaction.

Exit Madame. Enter Patsy. Tessie, who had arranged my breakfast tray, handed it over and then, looking up at my window, threw a good-morning kiss to me, in accordance with a pretty custom of hers.

On this particular morning, however, she managed, by means of a sidelong glance, to include Patsy as a recipient of that kiss; then flashed away, following her mother out of the room while Patsy, a silly smile on his face, stood staring after her.

Now, I am very fond indeed of Tessie, but nevertheless I am convinced that she intended Antoine to see this by-play of hers. At any rate, he did see it. With a sputtered curse, he stepped forward and launched a mighty kick at his victim's stomach.

Taken by surprise, Patsy saw it coming just in time to parry—with my breakfast tray. Instantly a spray of dishes and their contents twinkled

in the air in response to a resounding "whang" from that tin tray. The coffee-pot became a miniature geyser for the moment, its amber jet taking Patsy full in the eyes, temporarily blinding him.

With an evil grin, Antoine stepped forward to complete his victory; but the fates decreed otherwise.

At the first sign of trouble Mike had darted forward with a quickness truly remarkable in a man of his bulk. An apparently light push from one of his huge, experienced hands sent Antoine sprawling backward over a kitchen table, while with the other he bundled Patsy out into the yard.

In the kitchen doorway Mike paused for an instant, grinned, winked and closed the door just as Madame, attracted by the smash of crockery, excitedly burst into view from within.

Now Patsy hadn't been to blame, of course, in this instance. But it struck me that a red-headed Irishman, who has been the victim of an undeserved assault, would be much better elsewhere than in the vicinity of that assault if peace was to be preserved.

So I made him unbuckle that faulty, made-to-order leg and carry it back for repairs to the makers, while I waited for the breakfast which still was lacking.

It was Mike himself who brought the next tray. Carefully edging his broad shoulders into the room, he set it down on the table, then looked at me and grinned again.

"I seen that ye was lookin' on, Cap'n," said he. "What did ye think av the show?"

"Quite thrilling—while it lasted," I replied.

"*Whoile* ut lasted," he concurred. "But 'tis not over yet; things have got to be settled wan way or another. Listhen, now! Me wife's a good wumman, but she sticks to the notion she was raised wit'—that the best husband for a gurrul is the wan her mother picks out for her—and she's picked Antoine. Tessie likes that little scut av a Patsy, I'm thinkin', an' so do I. But, faith, I'm in no hurry to give her to him nor to anny other man."

To the wisdom of this latter statement I agreed, and said so.

"But if I'm a judge, and I think I am," continued Mike, changing the subject, "Antoine don't outclass Patsy as much as ye moight think.

"The lad has lived clean an' worrked hard, and he's Irish. I'm thinkin' that mebbe we'd betther let thim settle their differ'nces this day, whin lunch is over an' me wife, wit' Tessie, will be goin' firrst to St. Joseph's an' aftherward to a party for the christ'nin' av the Puchaud baby.

"There in the back-yard it'll be, where ye can see like ye was a-sittin' in yer own privit box at the theayter. So whin Patsy gets back from the blacksmith's, or wheriver it was ye sint him to, will ye tell him to come to me?"

Well, the thing had to be settled. And life is very dull during a long convalescence. Besides, I knew that nothing would better please Patsy. So I nodded.

"Good!" exclaimed Mike and, turning, he strode away.

When Patsy returned I imparted the glad tidings. He grinned mirthlessly, as a terrier grins when waiting at a rat-hole, and without a word departed in search of Mike. I was struck at that time by a suspicion, which in due time was verified, that somebody else would bring my luncheon that day—if I had any.

IT was Tessie who brought the luncheon in question, and I looked at her in some bewilderment. It didn't

surprise me, in view of the scolding she had probably received, to see that her eyes were reddened. But it wasn't like her to tremble, nor to flush, as she did, and then turn deathly pale.

I was sure that she hadn't heard of the coming gladiatorial combat, and lacking that theory I was at a loss. So I asked her bluntly what was wrong, but I doubted if she would tell me, and she didn't, but for a moment stood aimlessly rearranging the dishes.

"D'you know, *mon capitain*," she suddenly cried, "I don't believe that *maman* objects to Patsy as she pretends to. She knows that Antoine is older, and thinks that he'll be more steady, perhaps. But I'm sure she doesn't dislike Patsy—not really."

"Nobody could really dislike Patsy," I agreed. "Your father likes him, I know. He told me so."

I expected her to cheer up somewhat at this, but she didn't. Instead, I feared that she was going to cry, and in order to divert her attention I asked the first question that came into my mind.

"Isn't that a new frock, Tessie? Why the festal array?"

"Christening party," she replied absently, as I already knew. Then, after a moment, she swiftly stooped and pressed a kiss on my forehead. "*Hang* the Puchaud baby!" she cried, then ran away, back to her own domain.

This from a girl who couldn't pass a baby in the street without stopping and trying to make it laugh! I couldn't guess; but then, what man ever could guess how women will behave—or why? So I gave the conundrum up and devoted my thoughts to the coming ordeal by battle.

The wait was long. I tried to visualize Madame, as she set forth like an old-time frigate under full sail, convoying the lesser bulk of her daughter. I could imagine Mike, anxiously squinting through a front window, to make sure that she had gone.

Doubtless it was within a minute of the time that her departure became an assured fact that Mike appeared in the back-yard, which was to serve as an arena.

Wooden chairs were placed in diagonally opposite corners; buckets and sponges set in readiness. Selected friends of Mike's who, from their appearance, were wise in the ways of personal encounter, filled the kitchen doorway and all available windows.

Then the principals entered. First Antoine swaggered forth, attended by Emil, head waiter of the "Maison Mounet"; then Patsy, seconded by Terry Murphy, one of Mike's bartenders. Mike waved them to their corners, then addressed the spectators:

"This foight will have three-minute rounds and wan-minute rests," he announced. "Otherwise it has nothin' to do wit' Queensberry or anny other rules that iver was wrote. All weapons are barred. Iverything else goes till wan man is licked."

Mike beckoned to the principals, stepping backward out of their paths as he did so. As they advanced he finished his oration: "May the best man win!"

Now that they stood close together, the contrast between the two contestants so emphasized itself that my heart misgave me.

Patsy, lithe and quick as a panther, was also as tough as a porpoise-hide boot-lace, as I well knew. But I also knew the fearful advantage that Antoine's weight and reach would give; and the cook, though undoubtedly too fat, surprised and rather dismayed me by the play of

muscles which even that adipose layer failed to disguise.

Both men were stripped to trunks and shoes. But Patsy's shoes were of canvas, while the brogues worn by Antoine were heavy enough to have served in a Cornish "purring-match."

"Time!" called a man in the doorway, his eyes fixed upon his watch.

As though he did so through force of habit, Patsy extended his right hand. Instead of merely touching it, in accordance with the age-old custom of the prize-ring, Antoine gripped that hand and pulled—fairly heaved on it—while pivoting on his right toe, so that his left fist and foot could swing with the same motion.

I felt sick. Nothing human could withstand those blows, if they landed. But they did not land.

Patsy's act in extending his hand was not the bit of carelessness that I, and Antoine also, had taken it for. Anticipating the pull, he — Patsy — sprang diagonally forward and braced himself.

Thrown out of balance by his own force, the big cook snatched away his hand and covered his face with both arms as he stumblingly tried to regain his poise.

"Smack-smack!" The sounds, almost simultaneous, were like the flats of oars slapped on water, as my henchman's fists landed on those well-padded ribs before he danced backward out of reach.

I was surprised at the lightness of foot with which the big man advanced. It was plain that his claims to know the *savate* were not mere boasting. The kick that he launched was as quick as a striking snake, and nearly as deadly—but quicker still were Patsy's side-step and his counter.

"Smack-smack!" Two more blows, exactly where the first ones landed, directly over the heart. They bruised the big body sadly, and made it rather short of wind.

"Smack-smack!" Two more blows —six in all—over the heart, and one that neatly dotted a dried-currant eye. Far better for Patsy if he had not tried to dot that eye. It made him linger for the fraction of a second too long, and a wild, half-groggy swing reached the side of his head and sent him reeling to the ground.

He picked himself up, but the spring had gone out of him, and through the eye that still was in serviceable condition Antoine saw that it had. With a bull-like bellow of triumph, he charged like a bull, his head lowered, and the top of his round cranium aimed straight for the region of the belt, where it would do the most harm.

"*Knee* him!" I rasped. I hadn't meant to speak, but the words seemed to come of their own accord. It was a command, and the tone was that in which army commands are customarily uttered. I fancy that Patsy's body obeyed before his confused mind had time to act.

Anyway, his knee shot upward. It met that cook's lowered face; and I think that it really must have pushed his pug nose nearly as far inward as Patsy had threatened to push it when talking to me.

It caused Antoine to straighten and stagger backward, his flattened nose dripping redly, until he knocked against the chair which stood in his corner. Mad with rage, he gripped the chair and swung it high as he jumped forward.

Mike and the time-keeper sprang toward him. Emil, his second, tried to stay his arm, and almost succeeded, but not quite. Though the force of the blow was broken, the edge of the chair-seat struck Patsy's forehead. He fell limply, and lay still.

In no time at all four or five men were helping Terry Murphy to do all that their very considerable experience suggested to bring Patsy back to his senses. Mike Mooney, however, was not one of them.

Antoine had struck a foul blow in circumstances that made it, according to Mike's code of ethics, an unpardonable sin that called aloud for instant punishment; and he had proceeded without delay to answer that call.

There's no use in going into details. Suffice it to say that though I always knew that Mike was a powerful man, what I now witnessed was a wonder and a revelation. It ended when Mike kicked Antoine into the house, lifting him several inches from the floor with each kick. As he himself reached the door the big Irishman paused for a second.

"Some o' you fellas bring Patsy," he ordered. "Take him upstairs to my room."

"I don't have to be took—I can walk," averred Patsy himself, stoutly if ungrammatically, and, weak but determined, proceeded to make good his words. The other men in the yard followed him into the house, and the door closed behind them. The windows were deserted, and once more I was alone.

"ALL'S well that ends well," as Shakespeare so neatly puts it. Fully I realized that the affair of Tessie and Pat wasn't yet at an end, but with Antoine out of the running—and there didn't seem to be much doubt of that—there seemed to be a reasonable assurance that the end would be favorable. So I sighed with relief, and leaned contentedly back in my chair.

In a little while I saw Patsy leave the kitchen door; and as he hurried across the two back-yards, that of the restaurant and the one belonging to my house, there was ample opportunity to note that his head had been neatly bandaged, but that his face, instead of expressing joy, as it should have done, was screwed into a troubled frown.

I sounded the whistle which I keep by me to call him with, in case of need, and so he came running up the basement stairs into the dining-room.

"What in blazes do you mean by pulling a face like that?" I demanded as he entered. "When Antoine swung that chair he did the best thing for you that could be imagined. Mike won't have him in the place after——"

"It ain't that, sir," interrupted Patsy, his aspect of woe unchanged. "It's what Mrs. Mike will likely do that bothers me. For Antoine ain't gone yet. He's in his room, a-packin' up his clo'es, and swearin' by all that's holy to shed Mike's heart's blood."

"He's likely to shed more of his own nose's blood if he tries anything like that," I grunted in reply.

"Prob'ly," agreed Patsy dubiously, "*if* Mike sees him first."

For the moment, it seemed, Patsy's morale had gone A. W. O. L. In the circumstances, he undoubtedly would better not be among those present when Madame returned to find out what had happened to her favorite cook.

"You go on back to the thief that made that leg of mine and see that he finishes those repairs," I directed. "Tell him that you have orders to wait until he does finish them."

So Patsy went; and after the late exciting interlude of my peaceful but rather monotonous life, I felt pleasantly tired. So I lowered the back and raised the foot-rest of my adjustable chair until I lay nearly horizontal; and because I was thinking of the Mounet-Mooney family,

my gaze drifted to the three houses in which it was domiciled.

It was the slackest time of day, and there was little to be seen. But within a second-story window there was a movement which caught my eye. The window, with its white, frilly curtains was, I knew, one of two which opened into Tessie's room.

Tessie herself wasn't there, I also knew—and, anyway, the person whom I saw moving about was far too large for her, though at first I couldn't tell whether it was a man or woman—looking, as I was, across a sunlit space into shadow.

Presently the creature moved in front of the bedroom door, which was painted white, so that I saw rather more distinctly. Its arm moved rhythmically; plainly it drove a nail into the lintel of the door and other nails into the door itself.

With a heave it seemed to lift some bulky object and hang it from that nail in the lintel, so that it dangled against the door, but of this I could not be quite sure; the object was so nearly the color of the door. A match was scratched and, as I could see, was applied to the wick of a candle.

Now, why a candle in a room plentifully supplied with electric light? What on earth did it all mean? Ordinarily I would have felt only a mild curiosity in these doings. But recent occurrences had rendered me suspicious of anything unusual, and now these suspicions, which had been vague, became definite enough.

The candle-wick caught and slowly rose into full flame. As it did so, the light shone for a moment upon the face of him who had kindled it. And it was the damaged face of Antoine.

He had, of course, no possible legitimate reason for entering that room. What he was trying to do, I couldn't even guess. But it was safe to assume it was something evil. Mike must know of this, and as soon as a waiter appeared I would send for him. In the meantime I watched.

I saw Antoine place the candle—it was fixed in a tin candlestick, so that there was no danger of its falling over—on a chair not far from the door. Then he set Tessie's little electric fan to whirring; and after waiting for a moment to make sure that it wouldn't blow out the candle, he cautiously opened the door ever so little and, sidling out, closed it behind him.

So there on its chair, flickering a little, but not much, the candle burned, all by its lonesome. If undisturbed, it obviously would continue to burn until it reached the tin socket and went out, with a smell, to be sure, but leaving no other damage behind. If, however, somebody came into the room before that, and it was sure to be Tessie herself, what would result?

I didn't know—and couldn't even guess. But most certainly I was going to permit no chances of that sort to be taken if I could help it. I bawled for a waiter in order to send, hot-foot, for Mike, but nobody answered. I sounded my whistle until I thought I'd wear it out, but if anyone heard they probably expected that Patsy would answer it. At any rate there was no response. But after a time there appeared to be.

MIKE himself, with Madame panting as she trotted at his heels, burst from their domain and crossed my back-yard. I heard them stumbling up the basement stairs, and in a moment they came in through my doorway in much the same manner in which they had burst from their own.

"Ou est——" panted Madame. Mike interrupted her.

"Where's Tessie?" he demanded. "Have ye seen her?"

"Tessie!" I cried; and my tone must have answered the question without need for more words. So they told me their trouble, as well as they could, both so wildly excited that for a time I couldn't make them out at all.

When finally I managed to reduce the broken English, and English with a brogue, to its lowest terms, their tale amounted to this:

Tessie had duly attended the christening ceremony in church, but at the Puchaud home, where the party was given, she balked. The stuffy little flat, crowded as she knew it would be, didn't appeal to her and, as her mother said, "she made wrinkle ze nose." With a word to the effect that she would see her mother after the latter's return, she had fled.

Madame, I gathered, attended to her social duties in a very perfunctory manner after that. She feared something, though she knew not what, and that fear grew until it amounted to panic.

She had found Mike, and from him she had learned that Tessie had not come home—she could not enter without the cashier seeing her—and nobody had seen her. Antoine also had gone, but where they did not know. And though the fact is immaterial, it may as well be mentioned that they never did know.

"An' he—Antoine 'ave stole—took wiz heem, two 'ondred poun' of flour," added Madame. "Two—'ondred—poun'! 'Ow can 'e do it, an' why?"

"Two hundred pounds of flour?" I repeated, thinking that I must have misunderstood her. "Just ordinary flour, do you mean?"

"Just arrdin'ry flour," nodded Mike, in confirmation. "Four fifty-pound sacks. Can you bate ut? Is the man crazy, or what?"

Crazy? It seemed so. At least I could think of no other theory that would fit the known facts. I began to relate what I had seen through the windows of Tessie's room, which the interruption of Mike and his wife had temporarily driven from my mind.

"Antoine — in Tessie's room?" shouted Mike, as the first words left my lips.

"Antoine 'ave murder her!" cried Madame, starting to her feet. "See! Look!" she went on, her voice rising to a crescendo shriek. "She is 'anging! She—Thérèse—'angs to zat door, where——"

The shriek ended in a sort of gurgle as Madame collapsed in a dead faint.

Mike caught her under the arms as she fell and held her, with her head lopping to one side, her hat lopping still more, and her elaborate coiffure in ruins. His eyes were fixed upon that window of Tessie's room, his mind oblivious of all else. Naturally I also looked at the window.

The sun had shifted a little since I saw it before, so that the dim candle-light counted more than it had done. Now I could see the thing that hung against the door more plainly. I still failed to make out what it was. I knew well that so bulky an object was not Tessie's slender form, as her mother's imagination had pictured it. Mike's eyes, however, were better than mine.

"May I niver see the back of me neck if the thing a-hangin' there ain't thim four sacks av flour!" he exclaimed. "Now, *what* do ye know about that?"

Mike was right; I could see that now. But why on earth should Antoine hang those flour-sacks on Tessie's bedroom door? Mike must have been asking himself the same ques-

tion, for though I did not speak, he answered it.

"Why Antoine shud do such a thing is sure past me," said he. "But whativer his rayson was, he intended no good to Tessie. That's a cinch, and it's a thing I'll look into."

So preoccupied that he was quite unconscious of what he had been supporting, Mike laid the senseless form of the wife unconcernedly down and strode out of the room.

I saw him go, but my preoccupation was almost as great as his. He had given me a clue which set me to thinking hard.

Not daring to try and revenge himself upon the herculean Mike, it was more than likely that Antoine would try and strike him through his only child.

This was the clue; but at the same time I remembered that flour, scattered thickly in the air, is almost as explosive as gunpowder.

I had cause to remember this latter fact, Heaven knew! My father had been killed by an explosion that followed the careless lighting of a match in a grist-mill.

While safely confined in its sacks, the flour was even less harmful to mankind than it would be when baked into Antoine's excellent pastry. But let the sacks be torn, with that whirring electric fan to scatter it, and the candle flame to set it alight——

"Mike!" I called, as my thoughts reached that point. There was no answer. Wether he was still in my house or my preoccupation had given him time to reach his own, I had no idea.

"Mike—*oh*, Mike!" I shouted, louder still.

The door of my room was opened as though in response to that shout, but it was not Mike who appeared. Not at all! It was Tessie and Pat. Under one arm Patsy had the leg I had sent him for, and on the faces of both was the foolishly complacent expression of the well-known cat who has eaten the canary.

Patsy's other arm, incidentally, was around Tessie's waist. But this additional indiscretion on his part was not in the least necessary in order to make one understand what must have happened, and as a matter of fact I didn't remember it until afterward. My mind just then was filled with other affairs.

"After Mike—quick!" I snapped. "Keep him out of Tessie's room. Fetch him here!"

THE prompt obedience of that boy Patsy always has been a great comfort to me, as it probably will be to Tessie in the future. He couldn't be said to have left in any ordinary way; he just vanished.

But Tessie didn't even know that he'd gone, I fancy. With a little, distressful cry she had dropped on her knees by the side of her mother, whose eyes opened at the sound of her voice. So *that* was all right—thus far, anyway. So I turned my eyes and attention toward that bedroom window once more.

Very few seconds had passed while all this was going on. Most fervently I hoped that Patsy would overtake Mike before the latter reached Tessie's door, but this was not to be.

The trap that Antoine had set was simplicity itself, but very effective. It consisted of those flour-sacks, hung to the lintel of the door as I have described, and some nails, sloping downward, partially driven into the door itself, so that they would rip the sack, which would be dragged across them, when the door was opened.

I saw the door stir. Plainly Mike was pushing it, and my heart jumped. The first tentative push

against those heavy sacks was not strong enough to tear the heavy paper of which they were made. But the second push was strong enough, plenty!

The sacks tore and the flour puffed forth. For a second or two it flew in graceful, sinuous streams through the fan-driven air. Between those streams I caught a glimpse of Mike in the doorway, instinctively raising an arm to guard his face.

I had another glimpse, lightning-quick, of Patsy, who sprang forward to drag the older man back. Then the streams of flour united into opaque whiteness, like a thick curtain of snowy cotton.

This lasted for a second or two—perhaps less—before there followed a blaze so bright that it dimmed the sunlight, belching from those windows and reaching almost to mine.

With a rending crash, like a thunderclap pitched an octave too high, the upper story of that house gave a little jump, as though it were shrugging its shoulders. The outer wall of Tessie's room instantly became a flying shower of individual bricks. One of them struck my window-sill, to smash like a snowball.

There was a moment of silence; then distant shouts from the streets and nearer ones from panicky cooks and waiters, who ran aimlessly hither and yon, like disturbed ants.

A huge cloud of smoke bellied upward, disappearing as it went, but no flames followed it; explosions of this sort seldom cause fires. Therefore I had some faint hope that Mike and Patsy might still be alive, and was about to try and comfort the two women with this hope when the voice of Madame fell upon my ears.

"Ah, that *villain* Antoine!"

"But yes, *maman*," answered Tessie. "Me, I saw from the first what he was. But you—you did not see. So——"

I turned. Madame, still seated on the floor, wept copiously and held Tessie clasped tight in her arms. Neither were concerned about Patsy or Mike; they didn't know that there was any occasion for such concern.

Naturally they must have heard the explosion. But neither, sitting as they were, could see the flash nor the effect, and outside noise meant nothing to them just then. Tessie was sobbing forth her tale, and her mother had no ears for anything else.

Tessie was speaking in French, it is true; but as it happens, I understand French very well indeed. They were as oblivious of my presence as they had been of the explosion, and to avoid overhearing confidences not intended for my ears I managed to rise, with the aid of my crutches, and make for the door.

My intention, of course, was to find out whether or not my two friends were still alive. As I reached the passage my heart stood still, and so did I, as I heard two pairs of feet stumbling up the dark basement stairs. In a moment they had emerged into the light—and it was they!

Both were as black as though made up for a minstrel show, and their clothing would have dressed the parts admirably. Half the red hair had been singed from Patsy's head, and Mike was limping almost as badly as I. But both were grinning broadly, so I knew that all was well.

I was about to speak; Mike, who heard his daughter's voice through the open doorway, laid a finger on his lips and peeped in and for a moment listened.

"I couldn't endure it, mother dear. I *couldn't*—and neither could Patsy!" sobbed Tessie. "Already we had

obtained the license. So today, after slipping away from the Puchauds, I returned to the church, where Patsy met me and Father O'Rielly married us. Afterward we had to go and fetch the Captain's leg, or we would have arrived——"

Grinning still, Mike softly closed the door. Limping, he led the way into the front room which I use as an office. There, with a new note of parental authority in his tone, he addressed Patsy:

"Lave the women alone for the prisint, son, to enj'y thimselves in their own way," said he. "You run home, find Terry, an' tell him to hustle over here wit' some o' the same that we had today. Beat it!"

So Patsy "beat it". Mike turned and spoke to me.

"'Twas that lad Patsy that saved me, I'm thinkin'," said he. "He yanked me away from that dure, shuttin' it at the same toime. The inside wall av lath an' plaster didn't fly loike the bricks; only bulged an' split, an' most av the studdin' held. So here I am, glory be! Aloive! An' here, be th' same token, is Patsy an' Terry wit' the dhrinks!"

He paused in order to fill our glasses; then raised his own.

"Here's to the gurrl that is, the wife that she is to be, an' the son she has brought to her parints," he ended.

So we beamed at each other and drank the toast, while the women, after the inscrutable manner of women, "enjoyed" themselves in the other room.

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Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a few days. Thus we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded.

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M-6